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Bad Rhetoric: Towards A Punk Rock Pedagogy

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BAD RHETORIC: TOWARDS A PUNK ROCK PEDAGOGY

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INTRODUCTION

Punk is not really a style of music. It was more like a state of mind. – Mike Watt of The Minutemen.

Punk rock really came out of N.Y. as a philosophy before the groups were ever recorded. I had a kind-of intellectual interest in the idea of creating a new scene that could be a grassroots thing. - Greg Ginn of Black Flag

The Weak Defense argues that there are 2 kinds of rhetoric, good and bad. The good kind is used in good causes, the bad kind is used by our opponents. – Richard Lanham from *The "Q" Question (155).*

Introduction, Background and Pedagogical Connections

   In the early 1980s, a radical counterculture emerged in the U.S. based upon an extreme new style of underground music that came to be known as hardcore punk rock. The music was loud, fast and angry. The local

Figure 1.1 Punks on the prowl during a show

communities that made up this counterculture were largely comprised of angst ridden suburban youth who up until that point had no means of making their voices heard. These were young people who were reacting to the nation's realignment with traditional conservative values as the Cold War reached its peak and the economy slid into a deep recession. As this new genre emerged, suddenly a space was created where the

disempowered found power and freaks and outcasts found a place where they could belong. It existed outside the confines of the system, and in doing so freed itself from the constraints of mainstream culture. It was the beginning of the Do-It-Yourself ethos (DIY) of punk rock, an ethos that would have long and far ranging implications that are still shaping the culture we live in today. I am arguing that a punk rock composition pedagogy, as a method of engaging with and harnessing the power of the angst and tension associated with being a teenager in contemporary America should be among those implications.

Webster's online dictionary defines the DIY ethos as "doing it yourself" instead of the consumerist practice of paying another to do it for you, and traces its origins back to hardware stores in Britain that sold tools to weekend dabblers who sought to make their own repairs (websters-online-dictionary.org). Because one of the core elements of the punk rock ideology was anti-consumerism, it only made sense that movement would adopt DIY into its own identity as it actively sought to define itself in opposition to mainstream culture. DIY represented the independence to exist outside of the dominant structure, therefore offering a freedom from the constraints that came along with membership within that culture.

In the same way, composition pedagogy had adopted an ideology of letting someone else do it for us. That is to say that the institution far too often dictates the kinds of classroom teaching philosophies that we must employ. Punk rock emerged as a reaction to what was perceived as a system that simply manufactured and mass produced a shallow and insubstantial product that simply reproduced and perpetuated dominant discourse without casting a critical eye upon it. A "punk rock" pedagogy grounded in the

DIY ethos has the potential to emerge in resistance to pre-packaged syllabi and course curriculums that instructors are required to simply follow by rote.

Herndl takes up this argument in his article *Teaching Discourse and Reproducing Culture: A Critique of Research and Pedagogy in Professional and Non-Academic Writing*. He acknowledges that we have reached a degree of consensus in our view that knowledge is "…constructed or legitimized (an important distinction) through language and rhetorical activity" (Herndl 349). However, he also asserts that the kinds of writing that emerges from pedagogies based on this perspective are largely "…descriptive and explanatory, rarely critical" (Herndl 349). The problem that must be addressed is that this becomes a "…mode of reporting that reproduces the dominant discourse of its research site and spends relatively little energy analyzing the modes and possibilities for dissent, resistance and revision – the very issues that lay at the heart of radical pedagogy" (Herndl 349). Herndl is rejecting the notion that our pedagogies ought to be designed to produce students that are capable of functioning competently in whatever professions they choose to pursue. Instead, we need to adopt theories of instruction that encourage our students to actively participate in critical resistance to the dominant discourses in an effort to not only reproduce and perpetuate what is already there, but to also innovate and improve these discourses where they are found to be lacking. I believe we can turn to an analysis of hardcore punk rock to help us to accomplish exactly that.

Hardcore Punk, the Do-It-Yourself Ethos and *The "Q" Question*

It could be argued that the DIY ethos is perhaps the most significant contribution American punk rock gave to the world. The bands now recognized as being central and iconic figures in the movement, such as Bad Brains and Black Flag, both of whom will be

closely analyzed later in this thesis, demonstrated that there was no need to be a part of the corporate music factories that produced the "same lame sounds" that comprised the era of disco. Radical thought and expression were indeed possible when profitability was removed from the equation and the end goal was to simply be heard. Hardcore punk rock rejected the traditional capitalistic model that commoditized music, making it a product just like anything you might find in your local supermarket; a thing to be manufactured and sold at the highest possible profit margin. Punk rock was not about making money; it was about making a statement that you didn't have to be a slave to money. So these bands went out and begged, borrowed or quite often stole whatever equipment they needed in order to put together a band and record their music. They set up makeshift studios in garages or basements and started producing crude recordings and hosting concerts in any venue they could manage to secure. These "shows" as they came to be called would often be held at backyard parties, local community halls and even church basements. The venue was irrelevant as long as it provided an opportunity for the bands to be seen and heard. Audiences could range in size from a dozen to several hundred people. It didn't matter because the bands were looking only to earn enough money to perpetuate the punk rock ideology.

Clearly hardcore punk rock was engaged in rhetorical behavior that spanned across the entire multimodal spectrum – it was textual through the deliberate choice of the provocative and often inflammatory language in song lyrics. It was visual in many ways ranging from the adoption of outrageous stylistic affectations such as multi-colored Mohawk hair styles, the use of violent and crude imagery on album covers, and perhaps most importantly, the visual spectacle that comprised the live performance. And most

obviously, the music itself marked by an extremely loud and aggressive sound that necessarily positioned the movement outside of the structure of dominant culture. All of these elements comprised the persuasive strategy punk rock wanted to employ to affect social change. However, it was because of these choices that punk rock came to be defined as something "bad".

This allows for a return to the epigraph by Richard Lanham that I used to open this chapter. In Lanham's *The "Q"Question,* he takes up the age old debate of "Is the perfect orator…a good man as well as a good orator?" (Lanham 155). In the case of punk rock and its relationship to the dominant culture of the era, what Lanham refers to as the "Weak Defense" comes into play. Mainstream America believed it was engaged in the good kind of rhetoric which was being employed to facilitate a re-alignment towards more conservative cultural values. Punk rock was then seen as employing a kind of bad rhetoric, a rhetoric that was advocating an opposition and resistance to the hegemonic powers. It was a rhetoric of the ugly and profane; intentionally designed to provoke and inflame in an effort to enact positive social change. However, a far more useful approach can be seen in Lanham's explanation of his "Strong Defense". For Lanham, "…truth is determined by social dramas, some more formal than others, but all man-made. Rhetoric in such a world is not ornamental but determinative, essentially creative" (Lanham 156). From this position, there are no universal notions of what can be considered good and what can be considered bad. Nothing can be considered good or bad until we collectively decide how we are going to define these terms.

From a historical perspective, we can look and back and conclude that although punk rock was considered to be bad at the time, we can now recognize positive contributions

that it made to our culture, most notably with the establishment of the DIY ethos that has come to prominence in the digital age. We can therefore see what Lanham refers to as "…figure/ground shift between philosophy and rhetoric…a continued series of shifts" (Lanham 156). We can oscillate between what we consider good and what we consider to be bad. Each can play off the other, taking what is useful an incorporating it into the opposing ideology. The oppositional relationship between dominant culture and a resistant or subversive subculture becomes diluted. As was the case with punk rock, mainstream culture eventually assimilated the parts of the counterculture that it could exploit. But in doing so, it helped punk rock achieve some of the social change it wished to enact. Punk rock seemed to embrace many values that were deemed to be ugly or bad in relation to the dominant cultural norms and values, but it did so deliberately in the hope that that it could affect positive change in the end.

A pedagogy that is informed by an analysis of punk rock might attempt to do the same. By promoting resistance and dissensus as Herndl does, a radical punk rock pedagogy can engage with a kind of bad rhetoric that pushes back against the prevailing discourse of the institution. It can be a rhetoric of the ugly that could achieve the good of producing students with the desire and ability to think critically about the discourse communities of which they are a part.

Because of the complete and utter rejection of the mainstream music industry and through becoming defined as kind of bad rhetoric, hardcore punk rock was faced with challenge of attempting to distribute the music to fellow members of the counterculture. To do so, the bands would finance the production of the music themselves by going to a local record pressing facility to manufacture however many copies of their recordings that they could afford. The preferred format was the 7 inch vinyl record due to the low cost of production. Cassette tapes had long since taken over as the preferred format in the mainstream world, but those involved in the punk rock scene lacked the financial resources to mass produce tapes. The bands had no major label backing so they lacked the distribution channels needed get the music on the shelves in the large chain music shops. They were forced to distribute the music
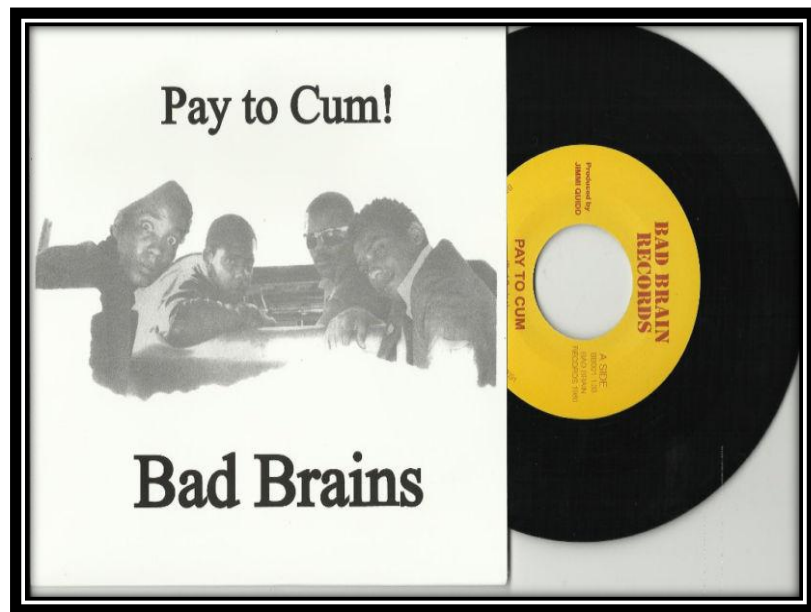
Figure 1.2 The Bad Brains *Pay to Cum* 7 inch single

themselves. This was largely accomplished at their live performances. Both before and after the shows, the bands could be seen, met and talked to in the driveway or parking lot of wherever they might be playing, as they sold copies of their music out of the back of their vans. They took whatever revenue was generated and sunk it back into equipment and more 7 inch records to sell at the next performance. It was far from rock stardom and

an ideal illustration of the ideologies that occupied the core of the movement. It was about independence, justice and the freedom to openly and aggressively question the dominant norms and values that comprised the foundations of mainstream culture. More than anything else, hardcore punk rock was about questioning everything and thinking critically. It is here that I find the value in applying a punk rock framework to composition pedagogy.

Personal Connections

   In the mid-1980s, I stumbled upon hardcore punk rock; a discovery that would ultimately change the course of my life. My older cousin Jim, who lived with his mother in Denver for most of the year, would make an annual trek back to New Jersey to spend the summer with his father. In 1985 he brought along a couple of cases of cassette tapes and vinyl filled with the violent sounds of the uniquely American hardcore punk rock that had emerged, flared up and began to flame out over the previous 4 years. I was too young to experience the phenomenon as it was happening, but I was fortunate enough to catch on to it in time to immerse myself and become a member of the counterculture as it was fading away. It was those experiences that came in the very formative years of my life that have led me to undertake this research. Nearly 30 years later, I still consider myself to be "punk rock" in so far as I subscribe to an ideology that promotes critical thinking and the questioning of the validity of institutional authority.

   The epigraphs at the beginning of this section from Mike Watt and Greg Ginn, both of whom are legends from the early 1980s punk rock scene, illustrate my point nicely – that is, punk rock was and is an ideology and a lifestyle. The music and the fashion were simply ancillary byproducts of an attempt to cast a critical eye on mainstream society to

expose the deeply disturbing contradictions and hypocrisy inherent in the dominant

norms and values of the era. When I tell people this, the most common reaction seems to

be that I don't look like a punk because I have longish hair and dress in what might best

be described as on the preppy side of things. But what these people fail to realize is that

American hardcore punk rock was never about tattoos, leather jackets, crazy hair or

combat boots. These were simple aesthetic affectations.

As Pierre Bourdieu might say in *Distinction*, or Dick Hebdige might say in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, these things were merely markers intended to communicate

membership within the counterculture. Countercultures often adopt distinct modes of

Figure 1.3 Henry Rollins performing as the lead singer of Black Flag in the early 1980s

stylistic representation in order to offer a method to define and differentiate themselves from the mainstream. However, the founders and innovators of American hardcore punk rock very often disregarded and even rejected these forms of representation. Black Flag for example, partially in reaction to the emergence of the violent skinhead community in Los Angeles and partially due to a rejection of the traditional punk aesthetic (i.e. multi-colored mohawks, spiked leather jackets and the like) adopted a simple style. They grew their hair out long and refused to adopt the cliché styles that characterized the earlier wave of punk rock that was imported from the U.K. in the 1970s. This new scene, as the aforementioned Greg Ginn described it, was meant to be a unique grassroots movement. It was to be something of the people, for the people and by the people. It was to be a distinctly American phenomenon, and the architects of the counterculture wanted to rid themselves of the comparisons to its earlier incarnation.

The Aca/Fan Approach

I am not approaching this research as a disinterested observer. Instead, I am approaching it from the perspective of what Dr. Henry Jenkins, the Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, calls an "Aca/Fan". He publishes a blog called *Confessions of an Aca/Fan* where he defines the term as "…a hybrid creature which is part fan and part academic" (Confessions of an Aca/Fan). Jenkins "…grew up reading *Mad* magazine and *Famous Monsters of Filmland* – and, much as my parents feared, it warped me for life"(Confessions of an Aca/Fan). In much the same way, I grew up listening to punk rock music and going to live performances as often as possible, and just as my parents feared, it too warped me for life. It is for this reason that I chose to undertake an

academic inquiry into punk rock. It is something for which I have a serious passion and it has played a significant role in the person I have become today. Jenkins questions the wisdom of only engaging in research on subjects from which we can be detached and impartial observers. During a talk I attended at Clemson University in 2012, Jenkins openly challenged this kind of constraint in scholarly research. He asserted that we ought to be researching the very things for which we have the most passion, so long as we are transparent about out interest and are able to achieve an appropriate critical distance (Jenkins). This is precisely what I have attempted to do in this thesis.

Counterculture and Rhetorical Strategies

This research examines and analyzes the rhetorical strategies used by the counterculture of American punk rock to contrast and differentiate their identities from the mainstream and how these strategies might be useful in informing new composition pedagogies. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige defines countercultures as different from subcultures in their

> …explicitly political and ideological forms of its opposition to the dominant culture (political action, coherent philosophies, manifestoes, etc.), by its elaboration of 'alternative' institutions (Underground Press, communes, co-operatives, 'un-careers', etc.), its 'stretching of the transitional stage beyond the teens, and its blurring of the distinctions so rigorously maintained in subculture, between work, home, family, school and leisure (Hebdige 148).

American hardcore punk rock clearly meets these requirements. The term "rhetorical strategies" can be framed within the context of Bitzer's *The Rhetorical Situation*. In Bitzer's view:

> Rhetorical works belong to the class of things which obtain their character from the circumstances of the historic context in which they occur. A rhetorical work is analogous to a moral action rather than to a tree. An act is moral because it is an act performed in a situation of a certain kind; similarly, a work is rhetorical because it is a response to a situation of a certain kind (Bitzer 3).

From this perspective, the term "rhetorical strategies" comes to mean the intentional and unintentional strategies used by foundational members of the punk rock movement to appeal to their audience and create an identity distinctly "other" in relation to mainstream society. This was in response to the rhetorical situation that confronted them. I intend to uncover how these strategies can be useful in developing a theory of punk rock pedagogy. I am examining the fiercely anti-establishment genre of hardcore punk in the 1980's and specifically the bands Black Flag and the Bad Brains.

Dominant cultures and opposing countercultures operate in a similar fashion to one another. Countercultures attempt to create an identity set in resistance to the dominant culture and the dominant culture in turn attempts to reintegrate the aberrant counterculture, or at least place it within its dominant framework of meanings (Hebdige 148). This project demonstrates that the counterculture in question was constantly forced

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to innovate as the mainstream seized its power through this appropriation. In this way,

the mainstream is able to maintain an element of cool without having to do the work to

create it on its own. Counterculture returns to the drawing board and introduces new

ideas until the mainstream appropriates once again and the cycle continues. This

essentially becomes an illustration of the "figure/ground shift" Lanham introduces in *The*

"Q" Question. There is an oscillation between the two opposing forces. Instead of

existing in conflict with one another, the dynamic can shift to a relationship based on

symbiosis. While it is necessary for a tension to be maintained between the two sides, the

tension serves to allow each to borrow and appropriate from one another in what can

become an evolutionary process. It is in this way that I am applying my analysis of punk

rock to composition pedagogy. A punk rock pedagogy that draws on the theories of

Herndl can enter into a similar symbiotic relationship with dominant institutional

discourse. By creating and maintaining a productive tension between standard

pedagogical practices and radical new ideas, an oscillation can occur between the two

where novel ideas can emerge and be assimilated back into the dominant construct.

Positive change can be achieved in this way.

Literature Review

The History of Punk

   To date, very little research has been done into my main objective of exploring the

rhetorical strategies of 1980's hardcore punk. However, a great deal of information

exists on historical overviews of the genre itself. One of the best of these works is

Michael Azerrad's *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Rock*

Underground 1981-1991. Azerrad offers up an in-depth, comprehensive history of the pioneers of the hardcore punk movement including Black Flag, an iconic band from the genre that will be a focus of this study.

Figure 1.4 The cover of Steven Blush's book *American Hardcore*

American Hardcore: A Tribal History provides a detailed oral history hardcore punk rock. Over a 5 year period, the authors conducted interviews with the foundational icons of the counter culture, including members of the Bad Brains and Black Flag, in an effort to offer an understanding of where it came from, what is was about and how it worked. By using this text and the subsequent adaptation to a documentary film of the same name as a resource, I offer a historical contextualization of the counter culture to which I can then apply theoretical constructs offered by such thinkers as Foucault and Burke. The theoretical constructs help to uncover and explain how rhetoric was an instrumental tool used by the counter culture in an effort to resist the dominant paradigm and how those efforts might be appropriated and applied to composition pedagogy.

Brian Cogan's virtually all encompassing *Encyclopedia of Punk Music and Culture* is an absolute essential for any study involving punk rock. It covers virtually everything that happened from start to finish with surprising detail on the most seemingly insignificant figures in the movement. This work has provided critical information on

who did what, when and why. It has been crucial in helping me to nail down the ethos of

Bad Brains and Black Flag, the 2 bands that have been examined in detail.

Rhetoric

I'm drawing on some of the classic works in rhetoric in an effort to make connections

that will provide a greater understanding of the rhetorical dynamics in play in hardcore

punk rock. *A Grammar of Motives* by Kenneth Burke will be critical in establishing the core principles of the study of rhetoric and then applying those principles to the rhetoric of countercultures. Because counter cultures are reactionary, there needs to be a motive behind making the choice to actively resist and oppose the

Figure 1.5 A group of young punks pose in front of a sign they have creatively altered

dominant culture. It is certainly not the easy road to take and therefore a careful

examination of what drove the hardcore punk movement is needed. By applying theory

from Burke's *A Grammar of Motives*, these motivations can be made clear and

connections can be made to the motivations behind the advocacy for a creation of a punk

rock pedagogy.

Additionally, *Burke's Language as Symbolic Action* has clear relevance here. The

language used in the music of American punk rock can easily identify with Burke's

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scientistic approach, or language concerned with the defining or naming of things, and his *dramatistic* approach, which is language concerned with symbolic action (1340). Both approaches apply. The counterculture was very much focused on casting a critical eye upon the dominant norms and values of mainstream culture and defining it in particular ways, usually negative. In turn, punk rock itself became defined in a very negative light; it became bad rhetoric. However, at the same time, many of the lyrics also served as a call to arms or a call to rise up and take action against the elements of mainstream culture deemed objectionable. In this way, the bad rhetoric was being employed for what punk rock perceived be the collective good.

Sometimes these calls to action were quite literal, while at other times it was symbolic. Black Flag's legendary anthem "Rise Above" from the iconic 1981 album *Damaged* falls into the latter category. In the song, Henry Rollins snarls "…We are tired of your abuse, try to stop us but it's no use. Rise above, we're gonna rise above…" (Black Flag). A closer analysis of the lyrics of this album will be conducted later on in this thesis.

Burke's notion of terministic screens is also applicable here. According to Burke "…if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality, and to this extent it must function as a *deflection* of reality" (*Language as Symbolic Action* 1341). In the case of American hardcore punk rock, the terminology used was largely the result of a critical assault on the dominant culture of the era. By focusing their attention solely on the mainstream, the counterculture was effectively seeing the world through a terministic screen. All it could see was what it

defined to be the contradictions and hypocrisy inherent in American culture. By selecting this screen, the movement blinded itself to what was going on inside of its own construct. Perhaps part of the reason that the counterculture had such a short lifespan (from early 1980 to the latter portion of 1984) stems from this deflection of its own reality. It had an inability to identify and deal with its own internal contradictions and hypocrisy. In his paper *The Death and Life of Punk the Last Subculture*, Dylan Clark asserts that punk" …'died' when it became the object of social inspection and nostalgia, and when it became so amenable to commodification" (Clark 223).   However, the death of punk was not a senseless one. Through its resistance to mainstream culture, eventually some of its core ideologies like the DIY ethos, were assimilated into dominant culture and succeeded in achieving some degree of lasting social change.

This is could be a function of bad rhetoric in a punk rock pedagogy. By actively selecting terministic screens that focus on resisting dominant pedagogical methods, a space can be created where new voices can emerge. Traditional methods of composition instruction that simply focus on style, arrangement and grammar have shown us that simply providing students the tools they need to compose writing that is structurally correct is not enough. What good is perfect grammar and punctuation if the writing is shallow and meaningless? Students must be taught how think critically if they are ever going to have anything interesting to say. By resisting dominant discourse, students can learn how to problematize institutional authority on their own and become prepared to challenge such power constructs as they leave the academy and venture into the world.

Bitzer and *The Rhetorical Situation*

Countercultures are reactionary. That is they emerge in resistance to and rejection of dominant norms and values present in mainstream society. In Bitzer's terms, they come into existence as the result of an exigence; an exigence being some sort of issue that calls out for an utterance (4). For Bitzer, rhetorical discourse is always a response to a particular *rhetorical situation*. For the counterculture of hardcore punk rock, the exigence was deep dissatisfaction with mainstream American culture. The movement was largely comprised of disenfranchised white suburban youth who felt that there futures were being sold out from under them and that they had no medium with which to make their voices heard. They believed that the world was becoming a much worse place, and this was the exigence that called out to be addressed.

However, it is important to recognize that this exigence was socially constructed. As the punk rock movement emerged, evolved and matured, it needed some kind of central 'cause' that it could use to help define its purpose. This 'cause' came to be a rejection of conservative values and corporate/consumer culture. It created a perception that these issues were highly dangerous problems in our society that needed to be addressed and then in turn, defined itself as the rhetorical voice that was capable of addressing them. Because hardcore punk rock was indeed rhetorical, then as Bitzer states "a work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world; it performs some task" (3). For hardcore punk, this task was to attempt to expose what it saw to be serious problems in mainstream culture at the time. Punk rock dismissed notions of good as defined by

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dominant culture and problematized them. In turn, it adopted an identity that personified the bad. It was forced to become bad rhetoric because it refused to accept dominant notions of what was collectively good.

Bitzer explains that prior to the creation of a discourse like hardcore punk, there are components of any situation we wish to define as being rhetorical: the aforementioned exigence, or the calling out of something that requires action be taken, the audience to be constrained in decision and action, and the constraints that influence the speaker and can be brought to bear upon the audience (6). In the next chapter I will take up a far more detailed analysis of hardcore punk rock as being rhetorical and have broken down and identified the dynamics of all three of these components.

Foucault

The work of Michel Foucault is important in my analysis. In *The Discourse on Language*, Foucault states:

> …in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled,
> selected, organized, and redistributed by an certain number of procedures
> whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to cope with chance
> events, to evade it ponderous, awesome materiality (216).

From this perspective, hardcore punk rock was an attempt to disrupt this power dynamic that governs the production of discourse in mainstream culture and it was for this reason that it can be called a kind of bad rhetoric. Being that it came to be recognized as a danger to the dominant paradigm, it was effectively closed off and excluded from

mainstream society. However, in addition to its relationship with mainstream society, the counterculture as it operated in the context of discourse, was also subject to these very same rules. Foucault's 3 constraints of discourse were actively in play: external controls, internal controls and the conditions under which the discourse could be employed. Additionally, the principles he introduces as possible solutions to the problems of discourse are also extremely relevant. Most notably, his principle of reversal and his principle of discontinuity are most applicable to this context.

Contextual Resources

Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* offers a look at the first wave of punk rock in the UK during the 1970s in the context of style as a defining element of the subculture. Because this first wave paved the way for the eventual emergence of the more Americanized hardcore punk rock, these elements of style were highly influential as the identity of the counterculture evolved. By drawing upon Hebdige's work, I have examined how these influences contributed to hardcore punk's resistance to mainstream culture.

Pierre Bourdieu's landmark work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* argues that issues of taste of largely contingent on social positioning. This idea is particularly relevant to the counterculture of hardcore punk in that it was overwhelmingly comprised of disenfranchised, white suburban youth. Bourdieu introduces the notion of 'cultural capital' that necessarily needs to be included in any investigation of this counterculture. Though the meaning remains largely intact, I am proposing that the hardcore punk movement employed a kind of 'countercultural capital' in that those who

identified themselves with the movement subjected themselves to a unique structure of rules of behavior that determined their ultimate acceptance or rejection from the culture. My analysis of the Bad Brains in Chapter 3 employs Bourdieu's theory exclusively. The accumulation of this kind of capital enabled the foundational icons of the movement the ability to carve out a space within mainstream culture where the counterculture could begin to emerge. While Bourdieu is known for his work as a sociologist, I chose to employ his theories in my rhetorical study of the Bad Brains because of its appropriateness to the subject. The Bad Brains use of bad rhetoric – textually, visually and musically – all contributed to their accumulation of social and cultural capital that allowed them to be regarded as iconic figures in American punk rock.

Methodology

The rhetorical strategies used by countercultures to define themselves in contrast to the mainstream have been challenging to uncover. Through historical, rhetorical, discourse and genre analysis I attempt to uncover what these strategies were, how they were effective in achieving the goals of the movement and how they could be applied towards the creation of a punk rock pedagogy. A careful and detailed look is being taken so we can better understand how the particular counterculture of 1980's hardcore punk used rhetoric to create and maintain its identity while spreading its ideological message.

A historical analysis has provided the framework for exactly why the movement came to be in the first place. Countercultures don't just spring up overnight because somebody decides they want to be different. They emerge in reaction to something else, usually something going on in the mainstream world. As previously discussed, in Bitzer's terms,

they emerge in response to an exigence. By conducting a historical analysis of the birth

and evolution of the counterculture and comparing that with the various cultural, social

and political happenings of the time, I am offering the context from which the movement

came. It's critical to understand the nature of punk rock so that we can further

understand why it behaved the way it did and what lessons we might learn in applying

lessons from punk rock to the teaching of writing. Additionally, I am applying theory

found in the works of Foucault to better understand the power dynamics between the

punk rock and the mainstream.

I am conducting a rhetorical analysis of two of the iconic and foundational bands of the

punk rock movement, the Bad Brains and Black Flag. 1980's hardcore was certainly not a

one size fits all proposition. It was made up of hundreds of bands with some wildly

disparate ideas about the change they wanted to enact. But nevertheless, the movement

still existed as a sort of unified macro entity with consistencies across the board that

existed in stark contrast to the mainstream pop icons of the likes of Madonna, Michael

Jackson, and Duran Duran. Through a detailed look at these particular bands, including a

textual analysis of the lyrics, a visual analysis of the bands and selected album cover art

and a rhetorical analysis of the music itself, I have attempted to identify these unifying

factors and attempt to comprehensively define the ethos of the movement and how that

ethos was so very different from the mainstream. In doing so, I have established the

foundation from which the study can delve deeper into the dynamics of the

counterculture. Theoretical constructs provided by Burke, Bourdieu and Foucault have

been used to investigate how the rhetorical strategies employed by the counterculture to

differentiate itself from mainstream culture operated within those systems and how the use of bad rhetoric helped them in attempting to achieve their goals.

The data I have collected has come largely from historical texts about the counterculture itself and about the conditions that defined the mainstream culture of the era. I have analyzed the body of work produced by the counterculture in an effort to resist and oppose mainstream culture (music, artifacts, art work, live performances etc…). Rhetorical theory has been applied to try to gain a deeper understanding of how the whole construct worked (identification strategies, persuasive appeals, power dynamics, motivations, consequences, appropriation and re-appropriation etc…). This data has been gathered and analyzed to formulate an understanding that accurately represents how all of these issues interacted with one another in a way that gave rise to a distinct culture that defined itself in contrast and opposition to the mainstream and how that culture can be adapted to a pedagogy similarly grounded in resistance to dominant discourse.

Chapter Descriptions

In Chapter 2, I undertake an in depth analysis of punk rock by first applying Burke's dramatistic pentad to the genre. Each element of the pentad – the act, scene, agents, agency and purpose – is applied individually to the genre to develop a clear picture of the rhetorical dynamics that were in play. Burke is central to the chapter and after employing the pentad, I shift my focus to *Language as Symbolic Action*, terministic screens and Burkean identification theory. As much as punk rock was a call to action to address socially constructed ills in society, it was itself 'symbolic action'.

The chapter also includes an application of Bitzer's *The Rhetorical Situation* in terms of the exigence, audience and the constraints that come to bear on the speaker and the audience. The rhetorical situation that became the catalyst for the formation of the movement must be identified and understood. Because every situation is unique, the specific elements that comprise the situation are crucially important with regard to the rhetorical strategies that emerge in response to them. For punk rock, the exigence emerged as the need of a voice to expose perceived hypocrisy in the shift toward a more conservative national ideology and the increasing growth of a conspicuously consuming culture. The audience became a group of like-minded young people who shared agreement on the fact that these issues did indeed exist and that they needed to be addressed. There were numerous constraints on the situation, most notably on the necessity of existing outside the framework of the dominant culture that the movement sought to change. By defining itself in resistance to mainstream culture, punk rock severely limited its ability to have any direct effect upon it.

If a new pedagogy is going to evolved based on the lessons learned from hardcore punk rock, then it too will need to emerge in response to an exigence that is calling out to be addressed. That exigence can be best described as the need to implement more effective techniques of composition instruction in the classroom. Our audiences will be our students, our peers and the institutional discourses that we belong to. The constraints will be our ability to have a positive impact on our students and our level of freedom within the academy to attempt to implement such a pedagogy. These will be discussed in more detail in the chapter.

Finally in chapter two, I address Foucault and his *Discourse on Language*. Foucault and

punk rock have a great deal in common in that both were extremely suspicious and

distrusting of the dominant power structures that govern society. He provides three

constraints that govern the way discourse operates: external constraints that control or

limit the power of the discourse, internal constraints that control chance appearances and

conditions of employment which select from among speaking subjects. Through

applying these principles to punk rock, I am exposing how it interacted with the dominant

power structure of mainstream culture and how it also operated internally as a discourse

itself.

Chapter 3 shifts away from background and theory and begins an analysis of one of

hardcore punk rock's foundational bands, the Bad Brains. I've always been fascinated by

the Bad Brains and that fascination is largely responsible for my decision to undertake

this research. Founded in Washington D.C. in 1979, the Bad Brains seem to be unlikely

icons of the punk rock movement. The band is made up of 4 African Americans with

jazz/reggae fusion musical roots who are ardent believers in Rastafarian ideology. On the

surface, it makes little sense that they would emerge as then fathers of American punk

rock. But through a textual analysis of their first two albums, "Bad Brains" and "Rock

for Light", patterns emerge that offers an insight to the reasons why it happened in this

way. A visual analysis of the cover art of the two albums, in addition to a visual analysis

of the band's aesthetic look and style offers further understanding on why they came to

be an ideal representation of what punk rock defined itself to be. All of these factors

contributed to the perception that punk rock was a kind of bad rhetoric. The pedagogical implications of this bad rhetoric will be explored in more detail.

Chapter 4 focuses on the iconic Los Angeles punk band Black Flag. As mainstream culture began to take notice of the punk rock movement, in many ways Black Flag became the target of dominant culture's efforts to constrain and control the counterculture. Greg Ginn, the founding member of the band, became the personification of the DIY ethos in founding SST Records as label to produce and distribute Black Flag's albums. SST would go on to serve as a model for independent labels that would spring up later, like Washington D.C.'s Dischord Records and San Diego's Taang Records. The bands frequent clashes with the LAPD led mainstream culture to characterize punk rock as something associated with gangs and violence, a definition that had little to do with the way punk rock viewed itself. I use Foucault's *Discourse on Language* as framework from which to expose the power relationships that existed between punk rock and mainstream culture, in addition to the internal constraints that governed the way the movement regulated itself. I have also provided insight into how the academy might respond to a punk rock pedagogy rooted in the notion of bad rhetoric doing good things.

Chapter 5 offers the conclusions I have drawn from this research. First, I will address what I have learned through the application of rhetorical theory to the genre as whole focusing on Burke's dramatistic pentad and terministic screens and how those theories as applied to punk rock can offer insight into our pedagogical practices. I then move on to address the Bad Brains and explain how such an unlikely group of 4 African-American Rastafarians came to be known as the founding fathers of American hardcore punk rock

and how this can inform our teaching philosophies. Finally, I explore the implications of

Black Flag as being representative of principles outlined in Foucault's *The Discourse on*

Language. This is largely focused on power dynamics between dominant culture and

subversive counterculture and how that relationship will affect our ability to implement

new pedagogies based on resistance.

Die Kreuzen's "Don't Think for Me" from their self-titled 1984 album on Touch and Go
Records:

I don't think for you

You don't think for me

I won't change you

You can't change me

Fight for what's right

Fight for what you believe in

You and I shouldn't fight

'Cause we know what's wrong and what's right

You and I should be friends

Or fight amongst yourselves until the end

Fight for what's right

Fight for your own goals

You and I don't fight

We know what's wrong and what's right You and I are friends

We'll live the way we like until the end(Die Kreuzen "Don't Think for Me", self-titled,

Touch and Go Records, 1984)

CHAPTER 2

THEORY

For every prohibition you create you also create an underground. – Jello Biafra, former lead singer of The Dead Kennedys.

Introduction

The primary focus of this research is the application of rhetorical theory to the genre of American hardcore punk rock in an attempt to understand the strategies it employed to create an identity in contrast and resistance to the mainstream culture of the era. I am then proposing that these strategies can be applied towards the creation of a pedagogy based upon a punk rock ideology of resistance. To this end, I have completed a detailed analysis of Lloyd Bitzer's *The Rhetorical Situation*, Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad from *A Grammar of Motives* and terministic screens from *Language as Symbolic Action*, Michel Foucault's *The Discourse on Language*, and Pierre Bourdieu's notions of cultural and social capital from *Distinction*. I what follows, I am using the theoretical constructs outlined above to analyze the genre of American punk rock from the perspective of rhetorical theory.

Burke's Dramatistic Pentad

In Burke's iconic work *A Grammar of Motives*, he introduces his highly useful dramatistic pentad to analyze a particular rhetorical situation. The pentad is comprised of act, scene, agent, agency and purpose (16). The act refers to what exactly took place, or in other words the action defined (16). The scene refers to the background or the context

of the action (16). The agent refers to the person committing the act, or in the case of the

counterculture of hardcore punk, the

entity committing the act. The

agency is the means or the medium

through which the act is committed

and the purpose is the ultimate goal

of the actor or the desired result of

the action. By analyzing punk rock

through this methodology, a clear

picture of the dynamics behind the

loose structure of the organization
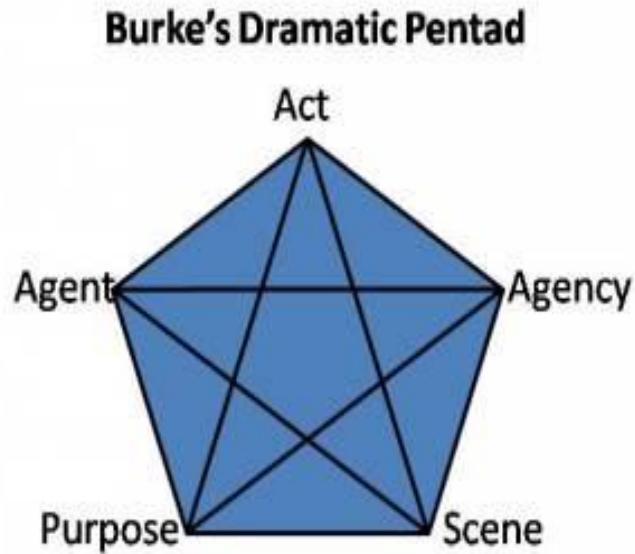
Figure 2.1 – Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Pentad

should emerge. Each element of the pentad will shed new light on how the movement

was created and how it employed rhetorical strategies in constructing an identity and

delivering its fierce anti-establishment message.

The Act

   The act that occurred in the creation of the punk rock movement was quite simply the

introduction of a new kind of music that the world had never before heard. While punk

rock of the 1970s laid the foundation for the emergence of hardcore, there are significant

differences. Bands like the Ramones and the Sex Pistols first popularized the

phenomenon originally known as punk, but did so using uniquely stylized music along

with a particular fashion sense. For example, the outrageous behavior and onstage antics

of the Sex Pistols won them worldwide recognition, but their message was overpowered

by the attention given to their behavior. In the terms of Marshall McLuhan "…the

medium is the message" (McLuhan 203). In other words, the medium that was used to

deliver the desired message, in this case punk rock became more important and

prominent than the message itself. The Sex Pistols, while recognized as a progenitor of

what would later evolve as distinctly American hardcore punk, were reacting to and

resisting a decidedly different dominant paradigm than that which existed in the United

States in 1980. In other words, to use the language of Bitzer, they were responding to an

entirely different exigence that involved that involved a separate audience and separate

**Figure 2.2 – The Sex Pistols demonstrating the stylistic affectations that came to
be associated with punk rock.**

constraints. The Ramones, while only slightly more subdued, played a style of music

with fast and short songs that relied heavily on more traditional constructions of rock and

roll. They certainly had a great deal of influence on the later genre of hardcore punk, but

once again, they were up to something different. They took what was already there and

cranked it up to breakneck speed to achieve the desired effect. A further study of the

rhetorics of both of these bands would certainly be interesting and applicable to this

research, but because the focus of this project is the hardcore punk rock, that research

will have to wait for another time.

   Hardcore punk was something different. The release of "Pay to Cum" by the Bad

Brains in 1978 marked
the introduction of an
entirely new form. The
release of just one
single from a band
comprised of 4 African
American musicians
with a background in
rock/reggae/jazz fusion
signaled the foundation

Figure 2.3 The Bad Brains in their early years

of a new movement that would flare up and burn brightly for a few short years before

burning itself out. A sample of the lyrics from the single are an example of the

disenfranchisement the movement would demonstrate with American society's focus

materialist culture and the accumulation of wealth: "I came to know with now dismay, that in this world we all must pay, Pay to write, pay to play, Pay to cum, pay to fight…" (Bad Brains). Essentially, their act in writing, recording, performing and self-distributing the song (all elements of the act itself) was a symbolic act of rebellion against what was deemed to be an erosion of the fabric of the society in which they wished to live. This brings us back to my idea of punk rock as being representative of bad rhetoric. If what we come to define as good and bad are socially constructed ideologies, then it is fair to say that dominant culture held the position of power in making these judgments. Because of this power dynamic, punk rock very clearly fell on the bad side of the spectrum. However, this is another example of the need for play or oscillation between good and bad rhetoric. Punk was very invested in attempting to bring about positive change in the world, but it did so through the deliberate use of ugliness. The Bad Brains as iconic figures in the birth of American punk rock will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter.

The Scene

In this case, the scene can be described through the historical context previously discussed. The emergence of hardcore punk as a counterculture is unusual because it is very difficult to try to place its birth in any one specific geographic location. As the first wave of punk (mostly from the UK) peaked, bands like The Damned and The Sex Pistols embarked on tours around the US in the late 70's. Prior to these tours, many Americans may have heard of the bands and their music, and some might have gone to extraordinary lengths in actually procuring copies of the albums, but the nature of the genre was that it

was something that needed to be experienced first-hand to understand its power and persuasiveness.

After the UK bands had travelled the country and exposed thousands of people this new and aggressive genre, the influence was immediately apparent as American punk bands, the seeds of the hardcore punk movement began popping up all over. Because the stops on theses tours by the UK bands were primarily focused in the northeastern and west coast of the US, it was those regions that saw the most activity. The emergence of the new brand of American punk was nearly simultaneous with the conclusion of these tours. The UK punk band The Damned became the first British punk rock to play in the U.S. when they headlined at CBGB's in New York City in April of 1977 (Cogan 49). In his book Anarchy Evolution, Dr. Greg Graffin, the lead singer of the punk band Bad Religion, describes the phenomenon: "In England, the Sex Pistols had self-destructed, while Sham 69, the Clash and the Buzzcocks had become famous enough to headline their own tours in the U.S., where they had a big influence on younger bands" (Graffin & Olson 24). Ultimately, the scene of the counterculture of hardcore punk was America in the early 1980s with a focus on the regions of southern California, Washington D.C. and New York City.

The Agents

With the notable exception of the Bad Brains, most of the bands that formed the foundation of the movement were suburban, white disenfranchised teens that adopted a

"do-it-yourself" or DIY approach to participating in the counterculture. There was little or no access to high end equipment, recording studios or the any of the other frameworks of the mainstream music industry. The nature of the counterculture dictated a rejection and condemnation of these structures. As a result, the people involved with the scene took it upon themselves to create their own network of resources to further their agenda. This largely involved buying used and inexpensive instruments and recording gear. Makeshift home studios were being set up in basements and garages. Independent record labels were founded and run by the musicians themselves. They created an environment that existed in sharp contrast to that of mainstream America. Through both the need and the desire to exist independent of the dominant paradigm, they created their own system that supported and fostered the development of new voices in the countercultural movement. However, as will be examined later, this was not without its problems.

These were not people who had any pretenses of achieving rock stardom and the riches that come with it. In Jay Babcock's article *Black Flag: The First Five Years* he quotes the band's drummer Robo:

> We weren't into rock star shit…None of this nonsense bullshit of fog and smoke and lights and dimmed lights. No costumes, no gimmicks…just straight-out music and passion…We want a carpet and a white light – we don't need nothing else! We set up our own instruments, we only had one roadie. We all did it ourselves (Babcock 12).

These were people who perceived themselves as being part of something important enough for them to make significant sacrifice for their inclusion. Many (including myself

as an Aca/Fan) became ostracized from family and education. They often lived in deplorable conditions, squatting in abandoned houses or living on a seeming endless "couch trip" where they slept wherever anyone had the inclination to take them in for a few days. When they toured, they had to book their own dates, frequently playing local halls, church basements, abandoned warehouses, school gyms or wherever else they could convince someone to let them play. And because of the aggression and subsequent destruction of these venues in the wake of their performances, they were rarely welcomed back to perform in the same venue twice. These were people who were dedicated to their cause and were willing to suffer unpleasant consequences for inclusion in a social movement that placed them in direct opposition to the power structures that were attempting to re-integrate them back into the fold of mainstream culture.

The Agency

The agency was clearly the music and the live performances. Because of the independent and DIY nature of the counterculture, one of its core components was the live show. An individual could own copies of all of the music by all of the relevant bands, but if that person failed to participate in the culture through the medium of the live performance, inclusion into the movement by other members would be denied. You couldn't turn on the radio to listen to this music unless you happened to live in the vicinity of a college radio station, and even then you'd be lucky to hear a random sampling for 2 hours a week. You couldn't walk into the record store at your local mall and walk away with records or cassettes of these band's recordings. The primary way to get your hands on the music was to attend a live performance and purchase self-produced

and distributed records. The money earned from these recordings was not used to access

a more comfortable lifestyle. Instead, the money was put back into simply perpetuating

the bands' and the movement's existence. These were usually sold out the back of the

band's van in the parking lot after the show. If you live near a major city, you might also

seek out an independent record shop that might carry the music. But even if you did,

they were usually short on stock and in rare supply.

The most common format of these recordings was the 7 inch record, typically

containing 2 songs to a side. The 7 inch EP quickly became the preferred format for

releasing punk music (Dodd 8). The reason for this was simply because there was

enough room for a few songs, and is far less expensive to produce than a full length

album (Spencer 287). This was direct result of the independent nature of the genre.

Because all of these works were self-produced, the 7 inch record was the most feasible

way to distribute the music. The band record on low end 4 track recording machine in

someone's garage, then take the master reel and a find a record pressing facility. These

facilities would rarely offer credit to these kinds of artists, so the bands would have to

pay up front for a run of maybe two hundred and fifty 7 inch records. They would get the

records, create their own packaging, box them up and bring them out on the road.

This process is an example of what Henry Jenkins addresses in his book *Convergence*

Culture. Jenkins defines the 'convergence' as being "…a word that manages to describe

technological, industrial, cultural and social changes depending on who's speaking and

what they think they are talking about"(Jenkins 3). Prior to the early 1980s, the

technology that was necessary to produce these kinds of products was expensive and

difficult to acquire. But as technology advanced, the equipment became far more

affordable and available to the public. The requirement for corporate support was

diminished and an opportunity emerged for independent musicians to exist outside of the

constraints of the institutional power structure. In other words, punk rock was able to

come into existence because of the availability and affordability of the necessary

technology converged with the core ideology of the movement. The elimination of the

need for institutional support created the space where punk rock could distribute its anti-

consumerist and anti-mainstream message without external constraint.

The Purpose

Ultimately, the large, overarching and unifying principle or purpose that lay at the

foundation of the hardcore punk movement was the resistance to and the subversion of

perceived problematic elements within mainstream culture. A punk rock pedagogy

would need to have similar roots. It would need to be playfully at odds with the

dominant discourse. I am not advocating a complete and utter rejection of contemporary

composition pedagogy, but rather a productive critical tension that holds the potential for

innovation.

However, hardcore punk was a very localized and regionalized phenomenon. Different

areas and different groups saw their purposes from different perspectives. In this way,

there were a large variety of unique perspectives with regard to what the movement was

really all about. The best definition I can offer is that this unifying principle was about

the absolute questioning of authority, particularly institutional authority. School officials

and the educational system in general were frequent targets of intense concern. Police,

government, the church, and of course, parents were all seen as subscribing to a particular

agenda that needed to be called into question. But because of the fragmentation of the

community, the focus of the rage of the movement was largely contingent on the context

of the particular community. In Washington D.C. for example, many of the bands like

the Bad Brains and Minor Threat vented their anger towards politics and materialistic

culture. Because of their Rastafarian ideology, the Bad Brains would often characterize

mainstream culture and the government in particular as "Babylon". In their 1982 single

"Destroy Babylon" the band says: "How many days do we sit around, while they keep on

burying all our leaders in the ground. Organize, centralize. It's time for us to fight for our

lives. Destroy Babylon. Oh there is a way" (Bad Brains, *Destroy Babylon*). Minor Threat

lashed out at materialistic culture in their song "Cashing In" off of their 1983 release *Out

of Step*: "Y'know something? The problem with money is that I want more. Let's raise

the price at the door. How much tonight? Three thousand or four? You know we'll make

a million when we go on tour" (Minor Threat "Cashing In", 1983). Essentially, they

were vilifying the world of commercial rock and roll where record labels and bands

generated huge profits from the commercialization of music. In another smaller

community where the church held strong influence, the anger might have been focused

on organized religion. In still another region with perhaps an overzealous police force,

the anger was vented towards the law enforcement community.

Punk rock pedagogy would also need to critically aware of the political, economic or

social concerns that most affect the geographic region of the particular institution. By

focusing on issues, whatever they might be, that resonate the loudest with students, we

can tap into energy that might otherwise go unused. Most undergraduate students want to learn and want to be engaged, but they also like to rebel; the problem is that we aren't always able to get them to buy into our methods and we aren't always able to provide a space for them to rebel in a productive way. There a pedagogy based on resistance "…becomes an essential concept for any pedagogy aimed at political and cultural self-consciousness and liberation" (Herndl 352).

But whatever the particular context, the message is clear. Do not voluntarily acquiesce to the will of the institutional authority without questioning it and examining it first. Ultimately, hardcore punk rock can be seen as a re-evaluation of earlier forms of punk, which became regarded as stale (Cogan 91). Hardcore became an outlet for the frustration and resentment that had long been building up in bored suburban youth who had serious anxieties about the prospects for their futures (Cogan 92). At the very heart of the punk rock ideology was critical thinking.

Many people not familiar with the movement (and even a few who are) get confused and identify the concept of anarchy with hardcore punk. This was not the case, at least not from popular culture's definition of anarchy. No serious member of the counterculture was calling for the complete dissolution of all government and power, but instead, it was call to look at our collective identity and examine what was being accepted as good and right from a new orientation. It was an attempt to open the eyes of a population that had grown complacent to the dominant paradigm's definition of what it meant to be an American. However, the nature of the counterculture itself was anarchistic. From a political perspective, the concept of anarchy is founded on the idea

of the individual being free from the constraints of government intrusion and control over their lives (Cogan NA). This is reflective of hardcore punk rock's rejection of the dominant norms and values of mainstream culture. It wanted to be free from these perceived destructive influences. Because this phenomenon emerged before the digital revolution, there were no means available to organize into any kind of coherent structure. Because the counterculture rejected the dominant norms and values that governed to behavior of mainstream culture, it was highly reluctant to adopt any rules of its own. One of American hardcore punk's central tenets was that blindly accepting the rules established by hegemonic powers was fundamentally a bad thing to do. In this sense and in this sense only was anarchy espoused by the movement.

Hardcore punk wanted desperately to show people that this complacency, this lack of a will to question the status quo, was exactly what those who were in power wanted from them. The counterculture wanted to expose that this kind of orientation led people to act in ways that were contrary to their own best interests. The movement chose to target youth through the acknowledgement of the difficulty in changing the orientation of older more established individuals. There was hope that by changing the perspective of young people and showing them different lenses through which they could see the world, significant change could be produced in the future.

This would be a primary goal of playing with bad rhetoric in a punk rock pedagogy. Promoting a critical consciousness that is self-aware and encouraging the exploration of resistant attitudes, even when those attitudes may be resistant to writing itself. Punk was certainly no stranger to poking fun at itself, with bands such as The Dead Milkmen and

the Dickies creating comical, over the top personas that ridiculed the genre while simultaneously occupying a place within it. We can teach students to engage with their writing in a similar way by granting them the freedom to lash out at the conventions of academic discourse that they are being forced to learn, while engaging with those conventions at the same time.

Language as Symbolic Action , Terministic Screens and Burkean Identification Theory

As briefly discussed in the literature review of the preceding chapter, in *Language as Symbolic Action,* Burke introduces his notion of terministic screens. Essentially, the way we use language to reflect reality as we experience it forces us to select a particular perspective from which we observe, and in doing so we are also necessarily deflecting other perspectives. There are always multiple ways for us to look at the world as we exist in it and we are limited in the how many of those ways we can use simultaneously. Burke breaks the kind of terminologies we use into two categories: "Basically, there are two kinds of terms: terms that put things together and terms that take things apart. Otherwise put, A can feel himself identified with B, or A can think of himself as disassociated with B" (Burke 1344). It is here that we find the relevance to an examination of the counterculture of early 1980s American hardcore punk rock.

Discontinuity

As a counterculture, hardcore punk clearly wanted to disassociate itself with what was defined as mainstream culture and the language of the movement was reflective of this

desire. An example of this is the Dirty Rotten Imbeciles' *I Don't Need Society* off of their 1985 album *Dealing With It!*. The song describes mainstream America as a
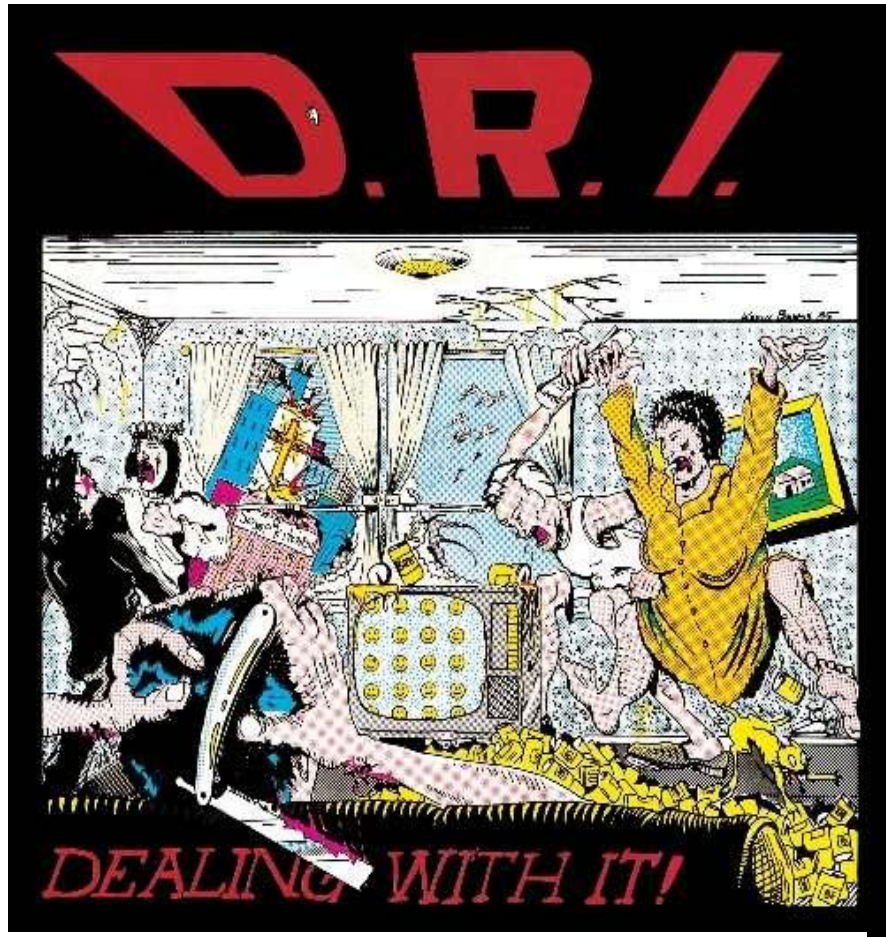
Figure 2.4 The album cover of D.R.I.'s 1985 release "Dealing With It!".

place where young men are brought up in a system that can call on them to sacrifice themselves in war without ever knowing the reason:

"Your number's up you have to go, the system says 'I told you so', stocked in a plane like a truckload of cattle, sent off to slaughter in a useless battle, thousands of us sent off to die, never really knowing why…Fuck the system, it can't have me, I don't need society"(D.R.I.).

   In this case, the band uses language that summons imagery of young men being carted off to die in a battle that serves only to support the interests of the "system", which can be interpreted to mean mainstream culture. What follows is an utter rejection of blindly following the dominant norms and values of society when those norms and values seem

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to make no sense. Therefore, "…fuck the system, it can't have me, I don't need society…" serves as discontinuous language that separates the counterculture from the mainstream. The choice of terminology then becomes a terministic screen, or a filter through which the movement chose to perceive life in America in stark contrast to how mainstream culture was choosing to see life at that time.

Continuity

   While the counterculture took great pains to use language that promoted discontinuity with culture external to itself, it also used language that promoted internal continuity in an attempt to offer some sort of coherence within a chaotic organizational system. Because the age of instantaneous digital communication was still years away, no easy means existed for the counterculture to unify. Punk rock scenes were highly localized. A few young people from one town that had discovered hardcore punk might discover a few more from another nearby town and loose informal networks would form. The music itself would often spread organically. Someone might be handed a low quality recording of a Black Flag or Bad Brains album on cassette. That cassette would be passed around re-taped again and again. That is how new bands were discovered and how new scenes were formed. These new collectives would exist outside of mainstream culture and due to the consequences of accepting a voluntary exile from the norm; these groups would feel a sense of solidarity.

   The music began to recognize this and terminology promoting continuity began to emerge in the music. Perhaps most notably, this phenomenon was clearly evident in Black Flag's *Rise Above*. "We are tired of your abuse, try to stop us but it's no use…Rise above, we're gonna rise above…" (Black Flag). The "we" being referred to here is not

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meant to be understood as the band simply referring to itself. Instead, it was an invitation

to members of the counterculture to identify with something that was bigger than

themselves. It was a call to understand that although the members of the counterculture

accepted and defined themselves as being misfits and outcasts, a community was

emerging that could provide support for those willing to endure the hardship and sacrifice

that accompanies membership. Membership represented belonging to a community.

Those who joined either rejected the norms and values of mainstream culture voluntarily

or felt as though there was no place for them within the dominant paradigm. When faced

with the choice of existing on the fringes of society alone or joining a movement that

offered camaraderie and support from like-minded individuals, those who joined the

movement acknowledged the strength that can be found in numbers. The repeated chorus

of "Rise above" implied that together, as a distinct entity, the counterculture could fight

against the hegemonic powers that sought to re-appropriate them back into mainstream

culture and prevail.

Language as Symbolic Action

Where does this leave us? It is clear the hardcore punk rock adopted and employed

strategies of continuous and discontinuous language in an effort to solidify an identity in

contrast and resistance to mainstream culture. In doing so, the counterculture saw reality

through its own particular kind of terministic screen that deflected alternate

interpretations of the world at that time. I am proposing that punk's effectiveness stems

from precisely the nature of its language as being symbolic action in the same way that a

punk rock pedagogy could. At the core of the ideology was deep mistrust of those in

power, a demonization of corporate and conservative culture and an attempt to expose the

inherent contradictions and hypocrisy that permeated mainstream society and institutional authority. Toppling these firmly embedded institutions was an impossibility that I am arguing was overtly recognized by the counterculture. Punk had no pretenses that it was going to successfully give rise to a revolution that would eventually re-construct the foundations of America. Nor would a punk rock method of writing instruction lead to a revolution in the academy. Instead, the emergence of the music and the language that constituted the identity of the movement created a space where that language could exist symbolically as the act of tearing down the elements of mainstream culture that were deemed objectionable. Essentially, a group of relatively like-minded young people began to think critically about American society in the early 1980s and what they discovered was deeply troubling. This presented a problem that called out to be addressed. Lacking the power and resources necessary to actually challenge these issues and effect real change, a counterculture emerged that developed a DIY ethos that offered them the tools to circumvent the hegemonic powers that wanted to keep them silent. The result became American hardcore punk rock; a counterculture that ultimately used language to symbolically act in ways they themselves could not. I am arguing we need to bring that same kind of ethos into the writing classroom.

Bitzer and *The Rhetorical Situation*

In *The Rhetorical Situation*, Bitzer asserts that "The presence of rhetorical discourse obviously indicates the presence of a rhetorical situation" (Bitzer 1). He uses several examples including the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address to illustrate circumstances where rhetoric and a particular situation were both present

(Bitzer 1). Essentially he is asserting that when a rhetorical discourse emerges, it does so in response to a particular kind of situation that calls out to be addressed. Therefore the situation must precede the discourse. In the case of hardcore punk rock, a situation must have come into existence that called out to be addressed by the formation of a discourse whose voice was a subversive countercultural movement. And in the case of punk pedagogy, another kind of situation must exist that is calling out to be addressed by composition instructors.

The Exigence

Bitzer argues that before any discourse can come into existence; the three components of the rhetorical situation must first be present: the exigence, the audience, and the constraints (Bitzer 6). Each will be identified, defined and applied to the context of punk rock. Let us first deal with the exigence, which is "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (Bitzer 6). As described in the previous chapter, a counterculture emerges in response to something it finds objectionable in mainstream culture. In the early 1980s, American society began to undergo a shift to more traditional and conservative ideologies than had been present in the previous two decades. Religion, strong family values and the accumulation of material wealth came to dominate the mainstream culture of the era. When the Reagan administration came to power in 1980, it attempted to address the economic stagnation of the 1970s through the implementation of new economic policies designed to stimulate growth. The result of these policies was an increase in the growth of the domestic economy, but at a cost. "…right-wing economics worked very well for the richest American families, but for a majority of Americans it meant a decline in real

well being" (Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf 4). As result, the youth culture of the era, particularly those in the lower and middle classes were witnessing the ascendency and privileging of the upper classes at their expense. And because the return of traditional values made opposing these kinds of policies difficult, an exigence emerged that called out urgently to be addressed. Things were perceived as being "as other than they should be" and punk rock emerged as a discourse that wanted to do something to correct the situation.

In the case of punk rock pedagogy grounded in a notion of bad rhetoric, the exigence can be found in Gunther Kress's work *"English" at the Crossroads*. Kress argues that traditional modes of composition pedagogy are based upon the idea we are trying to create students that are reflective of the stable norms and values present in our society, when in fact, such things no longer exist (Kress 66). We need to acknowledge that all we really know is that the future will look very different from the present (Kress 66). Today's students have grown up in a world where multimodality reigns supreme and it no longer makes sense to continue to grant text the privileged role in our pedagogies. We are at crossroads and a punk rock pedagogy can help us to choose the proper path to follow. As professionals in the world of composition instruction, this is the exigence that is so loudly calling out to be addressed.

The Audience

Bitzer asserts that a rhetorical audience "…consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (Bitzer 7). From this perspective, the audience of punk rock must have been twofold: the disenfranchised youth who made up the body of the movement and mainstream culture

itself. The young people who found punk rock to be a voice that spoke to their concerns about the changing face of American culture can be viewed as agents of potential change. The membership of the movement was clearly influenced by the power of the discourse. The discourse itself was in line with their ideological world views; addressing concerns about an increasingly conservative and consumerist society. The majority of those who subscribed to the punk rock ideology were in their teens or early twenties, and this made them a group with little real power. However, as they continued to mature and become assimilated to some degree into mainstream society, perhaps the hope existed that they might carry elements of the punk rock ideology with them and affect change when they found themselves in a position to do so.

Mainstream culture itself must also be considered to be an audience of punk rock. The mainstream was precisely the target of their displeasure and the audience most able to serve as the "…mediator of the change which the discourse functions to produce" (Bitzer 8). By creating an identity that was in contrast and resistance to the dominant culture, punk rock was positioning itself on the outside of the structure, essentially serving as a critical voice exposing what it perceived to be inconsistencies and injustices occurring within the construct. In order to do this, the movement needed to step outside in an attempt to be seen as threat that mainstream culture needed to address. Therefore, much in the same way that the behavior of dominant culture emerged as the rhetorical exigence that punk rock sought to address, punk rock became the exigence of a secondary rhetorical situation that called out to the mainstream to address. It was in this way that punk rock hope to be an instrument of change.

The audience for punk pedagogy would be multiple as well; it would consist of our students, our peers, and our professional community. Our students would be invited to engage in classroom environments that celebrate their youthful desires for resistance and rebellion and utilize them in productive ways instead of prohibiting these behaviors. Of course our audience is not without potential problems. We will be faced with the challenge of convincing our peers and our institutions that such pedagogy has value. In the final chapter of this thesis, I have proposed a model for how that might be accomplished.

The Constraints

Bitzer describes the constraints of the rhetorical situation as being "…made up of persons, events, objects and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 8). Because punk rock positioned itself outside of dominant culture, its ability to implement the changes it desired was severely constrained. Through creating an identity that would come to been seen as a threat that needed to be neutralized, it limited its ability to accomplish its goals. It was something that existed on the margins of society and therefore necessarily became marginalized. Because the movement relied on active participation for exposure and distribution of its work, its ability to implement change was reduced. And because its existence rested upon its ability to perpetuate an identity in resistance to the mainstream, when mainstream culture began to finally assimilate the movement, there was little it could do to defend itself.

Punk rock pedagogy would clearly be constrained by the institutions and departments that define our teaching curricula, in addition to the resistance of students to be receptive

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to such a learning environment (even thought that is precisely what I am arguing we need to harness!). It is for this reason, that I am proposing that the first step in establishing such a pedagogy would be to adopt the punk rock DIY ethos. We necessarily have to operate within the constraints of the academy, but we can find ways for our students to engage with bad rhetoric that exposes that composition pedagogy is not just "…epistemic and recursively tied to communities, but also as connected to material and social practices" (Herndl 354). We need to get our students to position themselves outside the classroom (even when they are in it) in an effort to promote resistance and dissensus as indispensable tools in developing critical thinking skills.

Foucault and Hardcore Punk

It is useful to apply Foucault's *The Discourse on Language* to a study of a counterculture as fiercely opposed to the dominant power structure as hardcore punk. Foucault and hardcore punk seem to have shared a seemingly deep seated mistrust and suspicion with regard to those who create and enforce the rules of society. While we recognize that it is necessary to accept some of these rules in order to be able to effectively live in an organized civilization, both sought to expose the rules that govern us in an effort to offer a new orientation from which to act.

Foucault begins *The Discourse on Language* by introducing his rule of exclusion, the first of which he describes as prohibition (216). When describing prohibition, he says "In appearance, speech may well be of little account, but the prohibitions surrounding it soon reveal its links with desire and power" (216). Essentially, he is referring to the communicative rules that designate who is permitted to speak within a particular

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discourse and who is prohibited from speaking. By simply identifying those with privilege and those without, power dynamics can be exposed. In the case of hardcore punk, clearly the movement was not permitted a voice in the discourse of mainstream culture. It's anti-authority message and the disturbing medium of loud, aggressive and sometimes violent music was not permitted a place in the framework of conventional society. Access was denied. An example of this will be discussed in Chapter 4 in the case of the band Black Flag.

After signing to a subsidiary of a major record label, the resultant album was shelved as the company refused to release it after labeling it 'anti-parent' (Sinclair 2). As result, the movement was forced to create and operate within its own discourse community. The problem with this is that through this creation of its own network and support community, the counterculture was also forced into a position where its call for change was going to go largely unheard by those who needed to hear it the most. The people that were drawn to participate were largely like-minded individuals who already understood and agreed with the message. In effect, the prohibition and exclusion from a voice in mainstream culture relegated the counterculture to simply "preaching to the choir". The counterculture was forced to occupy a space where those with the power to enact the desired change were outside the realm where the call for change could be heard.

This is the danger that punk pedagogy needs to be careful to avoid. While I am advocating that we can learn valuable lessons from punk rock that can be applied to classroom writing instruction, we still need to be able to operate within the confines of our discourse community to ensure that we our voice is not prohibited from the

conversation. In am proposing that we develop a method of instruction that is playfully at odds with dominant discourse, in a way that allows for us to productively engage with our students desires to resist and rebel.

   The second rule of exclusion that Foucault introduces that is useful in the examination of a counterculture is reason and folly (217). Reason and folly refers to what kind of speech is deemed reasonable within the discourse and what kind of speech is deemed madness. He says "from the depths of the Middle Ages, a man was mad if his speech could not be said to form part of the common discourse of men" (217). The anti-authoritarian message that pervaded hardcore punk was considered to be speech that was not common to the discourse of men. Neither could the behavior of the members of the counterculture. Mainstream culture lacked the tools in its orientation to be able assimilate what was going on. The dominant paradigm understood that it was seeing something alien that it didn't understand, and as a result, rightfully deemed it a threat. It was for this reason that as the counterculture was first emerging, there were a great many confrontations with police. In Brian Cogan's *Encyclopedia of Punk Music and Culture*, Black Flag's notoriety was the result of such confrontations, most notably when a large group of punks clashed with the police outside of the Whiskey-A-Go-Go, a famous punk rock club of the era (Cogan 62). This clash led to mainstream culture defining punk rock and Black Flag in particular, as a violent subculture that needed to be monitored. The police began surveillance operations around punk bands and harassment from law enforcement became the norm within the scene (Cogan 62).

Club and venue owners in the early 80's typically had little knowledge of hardcore punk. They would usually be contacted by one band or another asking to play and promising a certain amount of revenue to be generated by the performance. When the owners agreed, they had no idea of what was about to occur. The bands would come in, and upon beginning to play, the audience would erupt into a very physical and aggressive style of dance that closely resembled a violent riot. Hardcore punk rock did begin the practice of violent dancing, but this was not the same as engaging in violent acts (Cogan 234). The police would be called and upon encountering the same scene, they would wrongfully assume that a riot was indeed in progress and attack the mob in attempt to end the carnage. From their perspective, they had roomful of madmen listening to some kind of crazy music that were bent on killing each other. Therefore from the perspective of mainstream culture, members of the counterculture of hardcore punk were madmen that needed to contained and in some cases confined for the protection of society at large.

Foucault also offers an additional set of limitations that are internal to discourse that

apply constraints in an effort to control and mediate
itself. The first of the internal limitations is
commentary (220). In the context of hardcore punk,
this came largely in the form of what were known as
fanzines or 'zines for short. Because of the
exclusion from the frameworks of mainstream
culture, the counterculture once again had to create
its own network outside of the realm of the
mainstream. There was little to no capacity for
commentary through the traditional media outlets.
What little attention given to hardcore punk at the

**Figure 2.4 Maximum RockNRoll #35
published in May of 1985**

time through mainstream outlets was largely negative
and at best, a footnote. In the spirit of the DIY ethos
that characterized the culture, once again members
created their own magazines. These usually consisted
of crude magazines that were self-produced on
typewriters then taken to a local copy shop for
production. They typically contained record reviews
of new bands and schedules and reviews of live
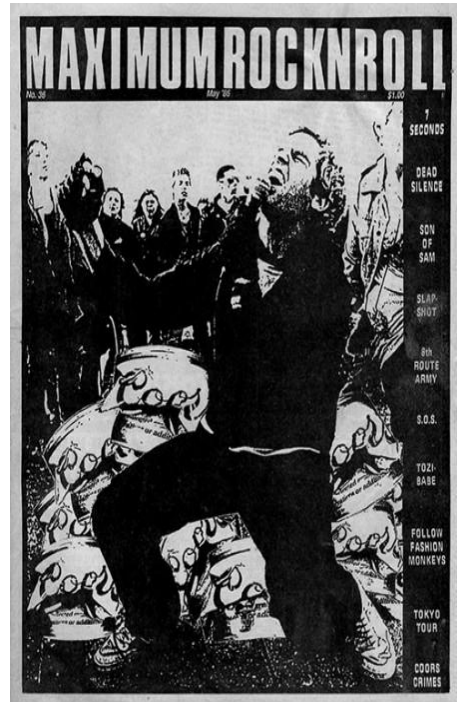performances.

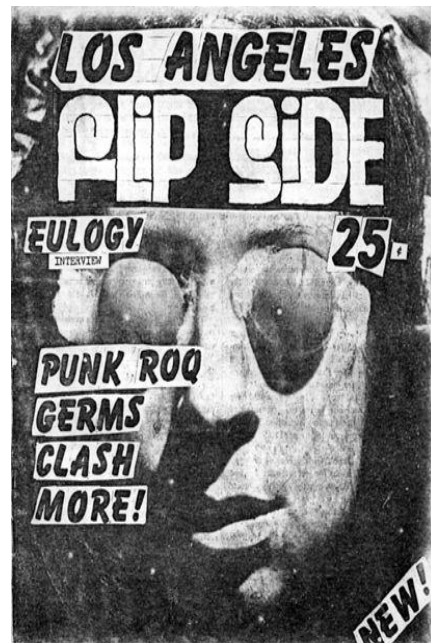These fanzines provided a loosely formalized

**Figure 2.5 Flipside magazine published in
the early 1980s**

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structure that allowed discourse within the counterculture to occur. They provided a body of literature where notions of identity and orientation could be shared, recorded and reacted to. And based on the success or failure of the fanzine, a consensus could begin to be attained. The fanzines that failed either had too limited an audience for the creator to justify the effort needed to produce it, or the messages within the publication were not in alignment with the orientation of the counterculture at large. The fanzines that succeeded reflected the proper orientation and thus reinforced and solidified the identity of the movement. Flipside Magazine and Maximum Rock 'n Roll, two of the most notable fanzines, enjoyed long runs of existence with widespread distribution and readership. Flipside existed from 1977 until 2000 before closing operations. Maximum Rock n' Roll, also established in 1977, still covers the world of underground rock music today.

When punk rock first popularized the notion of DIY, it was not an easy ethos to adopt. As previously discussed, it was difficult to acquire the necessary equipment self-produce and distribute your work. Today however, is a different story. In the digital age we have all of the resources we need at our fingertips to produce and distribute whatever we please. A huge challenge for punk rock pedagogy would be achieving legitimization in the field. A first step towards that goal might be the creation of a social network site where like-minded instructors could communicate about their particular strategies and styles. In this way, commentary could emerge in response to the discourse. Certain ideas might emerge as successful and grow and evolve as other instructors adopt them; other ideas might simply fade away. But through this kind communication exchange, stability and consensus could develop.

Foucault ends the *Discourse on Language* by offering alternatives to the constraints that control of discourse. In the context of the hardcore punk movement, I will focus on the first of these which Foucault describes as the principle of reversal exclusion (229). Traditionally, discourses are recognized for being what they are. That is to say that a discourse is defined by the objects and subjects that contribute to it. Through reversal exclusion, instead of looking at a discourse as the sum total of its parts, we instead identify what the discourse has left out, or the things that the discourse does not concern itself with. What is left out of the discourse can be equally or even more revealing about its nature than what is left in.

Hardcore punk functioned as the reversal exclusion identity of mainstream culture. It built an identity that was in stark contrast to the mainstream culture, essentially becoming a kind of negative copy of the mainstream. It tried to expose the seedy underbelly of society that people knew existed, but that most did their best to forget. For example, it would be safe to say that many Americans in the early 1980s were at least somewhat aware of the class stratification and social injustices being committed by a blind adherence to a strictly capitalistic society. But because these things conflicted with their particular perspective on what it meant to be an American, these things were excluded from the general discourse of mainstream culture. The issues were important and potentially dangerous, but the danger was easily minimized by simply refusing to acknowledge that they were there. Hardcore punk attempted to reject this refusal and screamed loudly in an effort to make people recognize that which they chose not to see.

But because of the external constraints of prohibition and reason and folly, their voice went largely unheard.

Applying the principle of reversal exclusion to the classroom environment could be far more productive. An interesting example might be an assignment that asks students to rhetorically analyze the syllabus itself in an effort to identify what things are left out and how those exclusions come to influence how they define what the class is all about. Teaching students to make meaning from what is missing can provide an essential tool for the development of a critical consciousness.

Conclusion

By applying these theoretical constructs to hardcore punk rock as a genre, it becomes clear that the movement existed as a form of rhetorical discourse. Burke's dramatistic pentad offers insight into the rhetorical dynamics at play between the act, scene, agents, agency and purpose of hardcore punk rock. The pentad also provides insight into how we might incorporate these elements into our teaching of writing. The act of producing a new medium of expression that facilitated an active resistance and subversion of mainstream culture created a space for the discourse to emerge and evolve, just as a punk rock pedagogy holds the potential for a creating a similar kind of space. The scene was kairotic in nature; it was the convergence of the nearly simultaneous creation of punk rock in both the UK and the US as technology became available for bands to self-produce, promote and distribute their music. This technological ability came into alignment with a deep dissatisfaction with shifts in social and cultural values that became the ideological foundation of the counterculture. As Kress argues in *"English" at the*

Crossroads, the higher learning environment today seems to be equally kairotic. Because we stand at a crossroads where we need to adapt our pedagogies to radically changing times, the moment seems opportune to attempt to implement new teaching philosophies. The agents were the bands themselves and the local fan communities that supported them. By existing outside of the constraints of dominant culture, the musicians and the young people that became the face of the movement positioned themselves to act as critics of mainstream culture. The core of the agency was the live performance. Because the DIY ethos was one of the foundations of the movement, distribution channels and opportunities for exposure were limited. Therefore, as Henry Jenkins describes, a participatory culture emerged. It was necessary for anyone who wanted to be associated with punk rock to attend these live shows and actively participate in the community. Ultimately, the purpose was to resist and subvert dominant culture, just as punk rock pedagogy wants to resist the dominant discourse of the academy. Punk rock was disturbed by trends towards a more conservative national identity, and used their medium as an outlet for resistance and rebellion and we can do the same.

Burke's terministic screens play a critical role in how punk rock came to view the society. Because it wanted to define itself as being on the outside looking in, the movement actively selected particular perspectives that highlighted and at times even exaggerated contemporary issues such as the shift towards conservatism, a return to traditional norms and values and perceived privileging of the wealthy. In doing so, punk rock essentially blinded itself to other events that were occurring at the same time. Because of these screens, punk rock was unable to see and react to mainstream cultures'

eventual attempts to assimilate the subversive threat back into the dominant culture. While the movement needed the attention of dominant culture in order to have an influence upon it, the very same attention proved to be fatal. Once punk rock became commercialized, it no longer existed on the fringes and was unable to perpetuate its existence as a truly subversive discourse.

By recognizing the terministic screens that shape our approaches to writing instruction, we can better teach our students how to recognize the screens that shape their own perceptions. However, we need to be careful of the paradox Bizell presents in *Foundationalism and Anti-Foundationalism in Composition Studies*. If a punk rock pedagogy were successful in achieving legitimization in the field, we would need to be critically aware that it might cease to be punk rock in the same way that the musical movement faded away after being absorbed by commercial culture. It could easily slip from an anti-foundational position back into a foundation role. If we fail to overtly recognize the terministic screens that shape our ideologies, we risking falling victim to "theory hope" or a belief "…that mastery of academic discourse confers objective mental powers" (Bizzell 40).

Bitzer's *The Rhetorical Situation* and his concepts of exigence, audience and constraints provide the framework to analyze punk rock as a response to the presence of situation that called out to be addressed. The exigence proved to be the cultural shift towards a more conservative society. To those involved in the emerging punk rock community, this transition represented an imminent danger that needed to be overtly exposed and addressed. The audience evolved as disenfranchised youth who perceived

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these changes as having a negative impact on their future potential. This was a group that possessed little power within the dominant culture and became attracted to the counterculture based on the opportunity for inclusion and influence in community of like-minded individuals. Mainstream culture itself was another audience of punk rock, as the movement attempted to use extreme and sometimes shocking strategies to expose the exigence it wished to address. Finally, because punk rock needed to define itself in contrast and resistance to mainstream culture, this definition of identity proved to be a significant constraint in its ability to affect the change it desired. By existing on the margins of society, it was necessarily marginalized. The range of its voice was severely limited. Because of this, it could do little to influence dominant culture. Once dominant culture recognized the movement however, its identity was destroyed and what little power it had dissipated.

Hardcore punk rock was a movement very much concerned with power relations in that it wanted to actively subvert, resist and expose the power structures that governed mainstream society. Foucault's *The Discourse on Language* proves to be highly relevant as a tool to use in analyzing the counterculture and its application to the writing classroom. His rules of exclusion, most notably prohibition and reason and folly have clear connections to the genre. Prohibition is applicable because the movement itself emerged as response to social conditions where those involved in punk rock were prohibited from having a significant voice mainstream society. By being forced to create a space outside of the mainstream, punk became relegated to the fringe where dominant culture came to understand it as something aberrant and unreasonable. From the outside,

punk rock came to be viewed as a kind of mad counterculture populated by undesirables unfit for membership in the dominant social order. These results are precisely the dangers that need to be avoided in a pedagogy based on bad rhetoric and resistance.

Internally, punk rock was limited by its ability to generate productive commentary. Mainstream culture was its target, but because it existed on the outside it lacked the ability to generate positive attention from the entity it most wanted to change. Instead it relied on internal commentary that came in the form fan produced magazines to perpetuate its ideologies. But these internal constraints were loose and the movement had no mechanism by which to regulate the kinds of commentary that emerged. As a result, the way punk rock was perceived internally became subject to the perspectives of those within the culture with the means and motivation to offer commentary. However, these viewpoints were not necessarily in line with the ideologies punk rock wanted to espouse.

Through the use of digital communication technology, a punk pedagogy has the ability to create a virtual space where productive commentary can occur. This will be essential as the teaching philosophy begins to mature and evolve. The discourse community can control the production of such commentary through the acceptance and perpetuation of some idea and the rejection and disappearance as others. In this way the community can actively and collectively participate in the creation of a radical new discourse.

Bad Brains "Banned in D.C." form their 1982 self-titled release on ROIR records

Banned in D.C. with a thousand more places to go.
Gonna swim across the Atlantic, cause that's the only place I can go.

You, you can't hurt me, me I'm banned in D.C. D.C.

We, we got ourselves, gonna sing it, gonna love it, gonna work it out to any length.
Don't worry, no worry, about what people say.
We got ourselves, we gonna make it anyway.

You, you can't hurt me, why I'm banned in D.C. D.C. D.C.

And if you ban us from your clubs, it's the right time, with the right mind.
And if you think we really care, then you won't find in my mind.
Noooo! You can't afford, to close your doors, so soon no more.

My oh my i lay you down upon the ground so soon no more.
Nooo you can't afford to close your doors so soon no more.

My oh my i let you down upon the ground

CHAPTER 3

THE BAD BRAINS:

RHETORIC, RAGE AND RASTAFARIANISM IN EARLY 1980S HARDCORE

PUNK

We couldn't afford to stay in DC. They wouldn't let us play in the clubs, couldn't really

handle our music and audience. So we went up to New York because there was more

places to play up there. – Paul D. Hudson, a.k.a. H.R., the lead singer of the Bad Brains.

Introduction

The Bad Brains came into the American music scene in the late 70s with a new sound

that would prove to be the foundation of hardcore punk rock. The speed and intensity of

their music coupled with the sounds of mellow reggae defied any initial attempt at

definition or classification. Their live performances were legendary for being events of

pure chaos; a sea of undulating bodies slamming violently into one another very often

extracting a heavy toll on the venue. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Bad

Brains revolves around their identity as a band, their identity in relation to mainstream

culture of the era, and their identity as a foundational force in establishing a fierce yet

little explored counterculture that had a significant influence on American culture that is

still being felt today. The Bad Brains were among the first entirely African-American

bands to establish themselves in the world of hard rock and roll music; "…the band stood

out for being an all-black band in the white punk rock context" (Boyd 50).   They were

highly influential in helping to shape the future of popular music as superstar bands like

Metallica and Nirvana openly acknowledge being inspired by the Bad Brains music (Boyd 50).

I had the opportunity to see the Bad Brains live during their 1989 *Quickness* tour after brothers H.R and Earl Hudson had reunited with the band. One of the most striking things about seeing the Bad Brains live is reconciling their visual presence with the sounds coming from the amplifiers.

Figure 3.5 The Bad Brains performing at New York City's famed CBGB's in 2006

I was a big Bad Brains fan and knew exactly what they looked like and thought I knew what to expect. But I was wrong. There was an odd disconnect rooted in the cultural conditioning I had received as child that made it difficult to reconcile the auditory experience with the visual one. To the uninformed and uninitiated, when the Bad Brains took the stage, it would seem appropriate to prepare oneself for a mellow evening of the

soothing sounds of Caribbean reggae. 4 African Americans with long and ropy dreadlocks clad in gear typically associated with reggae and Rastafarian culture invoked an expectation of what was to come. Anyone operating under those faulty assumptions would be completely blown away as the band launched into their set.

   As I began my graduate studies, I was encouraged by faculty members to choose an area of research that I had a real passion for. They told to choose something that would amp me up, something that would provide the drive to get up in the morning, roll up my sleeves and dive into. An exploration of 80s punk rock seemed the perfect thing to do. Punk rock was perhaps the single most important influence on my development into the person that I am today. Its fierce resistance and rejection of the status quo and its willingness to embrace difference were an attraction too strong for me to resist. And because I've always been a big fan of the Bad Brains, as I began my second life as graduate student at Clemson University, I found myself drawn to the unarticulated question that had been swimming around in my brain for the past 20 or so years.   How did such an unlikely group of individuals, these four African American Rastafarians with a musical background in jazz and reggae fusion emerge as a driving force behind the counterculture of 80s hardcore punk? While there was certainly some degree of diversity within the movement, it was largely populated by young, white, suburban disenfranchised teens. It seems counterintuitive that a band like the Bad Brains could have had such a powerful influence over such a group. So how did it happen? In an attempt to answer that question, I decided to turn to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' that he

first introduced in his seminal work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.*

While Bourdieu's work is grounded in sociology and not rhetoric, I selected his work as a theoretical construct deliberately. Because this research focuses on an analysis of hardcore punk and its application to composition pedagogy, I found his ideas regarding cultural and social capital to be particularly relevant. As I discuss in this chapter, the Bad Brains emerged as unlikely icons of American punk rock largely due to their ability to create a rhetorical identity that afforded them the ability to accumulate the necessary cultural and social capital to be legitimized within the movement. In a similar way, if punk rock pedagogy can hope to achieve legitimization of its own, it too will need to create a rhetorical identity that will allow it accumulate the necessary capital to be considered of value to composition pedagogy. Bourdieu asserts

> …there are relationships between groups maintaining different, and even antagonistic, relations to culture, depending on the conditions in which they acquired their cultural capital and the markets in which they can derive most profit from it (Bourdieu 12).

Punk pedagogy will likely have an antagonistic relationship (though a productive one) with the culture of the academy, and the way it accumulates its capital will dictate whether or not there will be a market within the institution for that capital to spent.

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Cultural Capital, Bourdieu, the Bad Brains and Punk Rock Pedagogy

In essence, Bourdieu argues that an individual's status within a particular culture is determined by the amount of resources of capital one has available to 'spend' in order to establish a position within the hierarchy of that culture. To offer a simple example, an individual born into a wealthy family would have ample access to money and education and would therefore receive a high level of exposure to the kinds of things associated with notions of high or refined taste. It could therefore be expected (though not universally) that this individual would use these resources as a form of capital that could be spent in order to secure a position in the high end of the cultural hierarchy. Conversely, an individual born to a poor working class family would have more limited access to money and quality education. Therefore, that individual would have less exposure to the kinds of things associated with securing a position on the high end of the cultural hierarchy. Instead, that individual would be exposed to the kinds of the things associated with low or common taste. Instead of being well versed in the great works of American literature or having a broad exposure to classical music, that individual would be inclined towards a familiarity with mass market paperback fiction or the popular music that could easily found by simply turning on the radio. Therefore to a large extent, it must be that an individual's access to resources of cultural capital plays a critical role in the identity formation of that individual with relation to how he/she fits into the larger structure of the cultural system in which they are necessarily immersed.

For Bourdieu in *Distinction*, cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status

(Bourdieu 12). The more cultural capital a person has access to, the more power and status they can achieve. Through this power and status, the individual can then secure a higher position within the social hierarchy and enjoy the comforts that such a position offers.

Within the greater scope of a culture as a whole however, and within the various levels that exist along the hierarchal spectrum, there are social groups that exist with which we interact and utilize to develop a kind of coherent identity of the self. It is here that the notion of social capital comes into play. Social capital is accumulated through these sub groups within the greater hierarchy, and the individual negotiates within these groups for positions of power and status which can in turn, have a significant influence on the opportunity to secure greater resources of cultural capital. For Bordieu, social capital is comprised of the resources that are available based on group membership, relationships (both familial and otherwise) that offer networks of influence and support. Therefore, if the resources of cultural capital available to the individual are such that he/she is relegated to occupy a position somewhere in the middle of the cultural hierarchy, (for our purposes, let us call this position to be 'middle class'), then that individual is going to be immersed in different groups that also occupy that same position. These groups may be professionally oriented, such as fellow employees in the workplace, religiously affiliated, such as membership in a particular church and participation in various activities sponsored by the church or any one of countless other social organizations that exists on along every level of the cultural hierarchy. The networks of support and access to capital

that exist within these levels determine the individual's position within those social relationships.

The connection between Bourdieu's theories of cultural and social capital, punk rock and the introduction of a pedagogy rooted in resistance should now begin to become clear. Punk rock as a social movement was considered to be a thing associated with low culture. It was dirty, ugly and lacked any of the refinement of things associated with high culture. However, it is here that things become problematic. While punk rock intentionally defined itself amongst the lowest of things, it did so in an effort to achieve the highest of goals; it wanted to affect positive social change. It employed bad rhetoric in attempt to accomplish good. A punk rock pedagogy seeks the same; a resistance to the dominant norms of values of academic discourse in effort to expose shortcomings and develop critical consciousness for the good of our students. We can return to the oscillation between the good and the bad as it related to the earlier discussion of Lanham's *The "Q" Question*. Notions of high culture and low culture or good and bad rhetoric are not static constructs. They are dynamic and constantly at play with one another. It then becomes possible to play with bad rhetoric and low culture in a way that accumulates enough cultural capital to secure a higher spot within the hierarchy of the discourse culture.

Findings - The Self-Titled Release

After going through the lyrics to all 15 songs on the original release of the self-titled *Bad Brains* album, a picture began to emerge that might help to explain their initial appeal to an audience that seemed unlikely to be open to them. Under the coding

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category of cultural capital, the category I designated for general references to a

resistance against mainstream, I found the highest number of references at 36. The

category of social capital, which I used to identify references to more specific elements of

culture (both mainstream and countercultural), came in a close second at 35 references.

Economic capital, which was used to designate references to the use of money, appeared

a total of 8 times. And somewhat surprisingly, religious capital, which was used to

designate references to religion of any kind (primarily Christianity and Rastafarianism),

appeared just 6 times. So what do these numbers tell us about the Bad Brains official

introduction to the world?

Coding Categories	Number of References
Cultural Capital	36
Social Capital	35
Economic Capital	8
Religious Capital	6

Table 1

   Clearly because of the abundance of references to both cultural capital and social

capital, the band, from the outset, were positioning themselves as something other than

part of mainstream culture. Their lyrics were sending a message that was both

questioning and rejecting the traditional norms and values of mainstream culture.

Consider the very short lyrics of the Bad Brains classic *Attitude*: "Don't' care what they

may say, we got that attitude. Don't care what they may do, we got that attitude. Hey we

got that PMA. Hey we got that PMA". I coded the lyrics to this song as falling under the

category of social capital. Through the use of the transcendent "they" (in reference to

those not a part of the 'we'), they were establishing an identity in direct contrast to the

'they'. They were effectively carving out a space for the counterculture to be able to

exist. The PMA or 'positive mental attitude' being introduced was a mechanism being

offered as toll to be used in resisting the dominant culture. Resisting the mainstream

powers is not without consequence. By introducing the notion of the PMA, the Bad

Brains were developing a coping strategy to deal with the negative consequences of

rejecting the mainstream. This was an attitude that that would later be adopted by many

others as the counterculture evolved. This PMA became a new form of social capital that

would be eventually be used to position oneself within the context of the countercultural

phenomenon.

The fact that the Bad Brains were subjected to a de facto ban from playing within the

confines of Washington D.C. and the seminal anthem *Banned in D.C.* that emerged as a

result both contributed greatly to the bands foundational influence on the counterculture.

Because of the perceived violence that became associated with their performances and

subsequent confrontations with police, the band was essentially forced to leave D.C. for

New York City, where opportunities to perform were not so restricted (Maskell 415). For

a movement that was beginning to define itself in terms that were in stark contrast to

mainstream culture, being exiled from their hometown which also happened to be the

political capital of the nation, lent the band an unassailable ethos. This song was heavily

reliant on lyrics referencing cultural capital, in that their expulsion from the scene that

they helped to create, while removing from the particular regional social structure that

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originally granted them power within the counterculture, simultaneously elevated them to near god like status within the movement. By releasing the song *Banned in D.C.* as a public response, the band was able to articulate their rage and further challenge the mainstream norms and values that were the cause of the ban. These lyrics from the song provide an example: "We got ourselves, gonna sing it, gonna love it, gonna work it out to any length. Don't worry, no worry about what people say. We got ourselves, we gonna make it anyway. You, you can't hurt me, Why? I'm banned in D.C...." (Bad Brains, 1982). Again, the band uses the identification with a 'we' versus a 'they' as a technique to hollow out a space for the counterculture to reside. Within hardcore punk, membership with the "we" becomes the social capital needed to establish status. If you identified with the 'we', then you could be assimilated in to the group. If you identified, or were identified with the 'they', then you were refused access to the social organization. In other words, a kind of new system of cultural capital was being inadvertently established, and the norms and values of that system were very different from that of mainstream America.

It's important to note that while references to economic capital came in near the bottom of the list of number of appearances in the lyrics with relation to the coding categories, the reference is still significant in the Bad Brains and hardcore punk's evolving identity. Nearly every reference to economic capital comes in the classic first release *Pay to Cum*. While the track itself doesn't appear until the latter portion of the album itself, it must be acknowledged that this song was actually the first piece of music ever released by the band in 1980. Because it was initially released a 7 inch single (as

was most of the punk music of the time…) it stood by itself as the first complete composition by the made available to the public. Therefore people who were exposed to the Bad Brains through this single had only one song through which to form an impression about the band's identity. The second stanza of the lyrics are telling: "I came to know with now dismay, that in this world we all must pay, pay to write, pay to play, pay to cum, pay to fight…"(Bad Brains 1982). The band seems to be lashing out at a culture that values economic capital to a degree that the member of that culture is forced to pay for virtually everything. And this is not to say that the reference to 'paying' is solely identifiable with economic capital. It seems that it's actually indicting the entire system of cultural capital, as it existed in the mainstream world. In order to accomplish anything there needed to be a kind of exchange. To 'pay to write' seems to imply that there is a cost associated with the act of writing. It might be a personal cost on the identity of the writer, or an economic cost associated with trying to get something published or the need to spend social capital in order to position the writing into a place where the voice might be heard. Whatever the cost might be is left largely up to the individual and their ability to accrue the capital they need.

The need to 'pay to write' has interesting implications to punk rock pedagogy. In order for any teaching philosophy to gain legitimacy within the institution, it must first accumulate the social and cultural capital needed to secure a position within the hierarchy of the academy. As is evident from the analysis above, the Bad Brains were able to accomplish this goal through the process of recognition of the needs and desires of their emerging rhetorical audience and the crafting of a message that the audience would find

appealing. Additionally, they achieved this through rhetorical behaviors across the multimodal spectrum. They combined textual, visual, and musical rhetorics to create a powerful identity that resonated with the still new American punk rock movement. This allowed them to accumulate the necessary capital to earn a place within the social construct of punk rock. Punk rock pedagogy can learn a lesson from the Bad brains as it too attempts to earn a "seat at the table" of academic discourse. We too need to employ strategies that incorporate the textual, visual and musical. We need to recognize that as Kress argues, we are indeed at a crossroads and we have not yet definitively chosen our path.

Finally, with regard to the self-titled album, no discussion could be complete without an examination of the iconic imagery that appeared on the album's cover art.

The Self-Titled Album's Cover Art

Figure 3.2 The cover art from Bad Brains first full length self-titled release

The cover of the band's first full length release depicts a lightning bolt shattering the

dome of the Capitol building. This very image embodies all the kinds of cultural capital

that I have discussed so far and how the Bad Brains seem to have felt about it. From the

perspective of cultural capital as I've previously defined it, the imagery clearly represents

an opposition, resistance and hostility towards to norms and values of the mainstream

society of the era. Keep in mind that this was released long before movies like *Independence Day* desensitized us to images of symbolic American architecture being destroyed before our eyes. This was an extremely provocative album cover. The dome of the Capitol, shattered by a giant lightning bolt from above came to represent a core value of hardcore punk: stark and unwavering resistance to authority and the incessant questioning of the motives of those who hold power over us.

30 years later, the image certainly evokes the memory of 9/11. While the Capitol building itself was not attacked, the Pentagon was and other Washington D.C. landmarks were unsuccessfully targeted as well. This invites the comparison of the Bad Brains, and even hardcore punk rock itself, to domestic terrorism. The FBI defines domestic terrorism as:

> Domestic terrorism is the unlawful use, or threatened use, of force or violence by a group or individual based and operating entirely within the United States or Puerto Rico without foreign direction committed against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives (Terrorism 2002-2005, USDOJ and FBI).

Given this definition, it is impossible not to explore hardcore punk rock as a terrorist movement. While the majority of the violence associated with the counterculture was directed outwardly towards mainstream society, there were violent confrontations with police and a great deal of property was damaged or destroyed. The core ideology of the movement was founded in the overt desire to resist and subvert mainstream culture. This

resistance and subversion were clear efforts to further political and social objectives; specifically they were attempts to expose the inconsistency and hypocrisy between how dominant culture behaved and how it wanted to define itself. America, then and now, asserts that is founded upon principles of freedom and equality. The Bad Brains and hardcore punk wanted to expose that due to socioeconomic class stratification along with gender and racial inequality, the nation was not in fact what it defined itself to be. The production, distribution and performance of music and images that were opposed to the dominant norms and values of mainstream society and the emergence of a counterculture that required active participation in order to gain membership, by today's standards we would necessarily have to classify the band and the movement as being representative of a form of domestic terrorism which would certainly also place it in the realm of bad rhetoric.

   While advocates of a pedagogy based on bad rhetoric and resistance to dominant discourse would almost certainly not be defined as academic terrorists, it might not be far off. What must be remembered is the play between what we define as being good and what we define as being bad. Because these definitions are socially constructed, they are subject to shifts in position. The simple act of associating a pedagogical philosophy with punk rock is likely to invite exclusion. However, such exclusion can be incorporated as a learning opportunity. If punk pedagogy wants to push back against the institution, then such exclusion can only serve to help validate that it is accomplishing what it wants to do. Just as the Bad Brains ban from their hometown of Washington D.C. only served to

strengthen their ethos within the culture of punk rock, the same can true in validating

pedagogy of resistance.

From the perspective of social capital, taking the bands exile from Washington D.C. into account, the cover is highly symbolic of a feeling of rage towards the beloved hometown that decided to expel its sons. It could be read as being representative of a desire for retribution against those who commit injustice against us. In terms of economic capital, because D.C. is the capital of our nation, it was there that the decisions were made that affected the pocketbooks and bank accounts of every American. The cover seems to express a desire to shatter the system; a system that has long been corrupted and governed not by the best interests of the people, but by the economic interests of those charged with governing the people. And finally, perhaps the largest element of the image is the giant yellow lightning bolt, striking down from above, shattering the symbolic center of a cultural system gone horribly awry. As I mentioned earlier, with regard to the 4 categories, references to religious capital appeared the fewest number of times out of the however. However, the album art itself presents a powerful representation of the bands strong ties with a Rastafarian identity. Notice the choice of colors – yellow, red and green. We are accustomed to seeing images of Washington D.C. surrounded with red, white and blue. This purposeful juxtaposition of colors surrounding the artwork serves to create a kind of tension in the viewer. Yellow, red and green are also the colors of both the Ethiopian and Jamaican flags, two countries with extremely strong ties to Rastafarianism. An iconic building symbolic of what it meant to be an American being shattered against a background of colors that we didn't associate with

our national identity lends itself to quietly disturbing effect. The lightning bolt flung to Earth by the mighty Jah, shattering the heart of Babylon and ushering in a new era of salvation.

Findings II – *Rock for Light*

   Just as I had done for the self-titled album, I combed through the lyrics of all 17 songs on Bad Brains second release *Rock for Light* and a different kind of picture emerged. I used the same 4 categories of references to cultural capital, social capital, economic capital and religious capital and arrived at these results: Cultural capital was referenced 27 times, social capital was referenced 37 times, economic capital was referenced 4 times, and in stark contrast to the first release, religious capital was referenced 47 times. The numbers of the first 3 categories differed from the first self-titled release, but not anywhere near the significance of the difference between the numbers of religious references between the 2 albums. Overt references to religion (and specifically Rastafarianism) multiplied nearly 8 times between the two releases jumping from just 6 references on the self-titled release to 47 on the second release. As this pattern became clear, it forced the question of why?

Coding Categories	Number of References
Cultural Capital	27
Social Capital	37
Economic Capital	4
Religious Capital	47

   Table 2

But before I get to that, it must be acknowledged that the relative consistency in the references of the other coding categories was due largely to the fact that there was a significant overlap between the albums. *Attitude*, *Sailin' On*, *Right Brigade*, *FVK* and *Banned in D.C.* all appeared on the both the self-titled release and *Rock for Light*. It is important to recognize that 5 of the 17 songs on the new album had already been released on the first. Therefore when analyzing the numbers with relation to the frequency of occurrence of the coding categories, it must be said that those 5 songs were all representative of high frequencies of occurrence of references to cultural and social capital. When this is taken into account, it becomes clear that the new material that was released on Rock for Light had a decidedly religious slant. In fact, 7 of the 12 new releases were nearly entirely associated with Rastafarianism.

The very first song on Rock for Light is *Coptic Times*, a song with lyrics that when looked at by themselves outside of the context of American hardcore punk, would seem to have very little to do with a radical countercultural movement. Take a few of the lines for example – "These are Coptic times…got a right to live my life with no burdens over me, so I choose to read the Holy Bible and take what Jah has given me…"(*Coptic Times* Bad Brains). Or "…Leaving this place won't be no big disgrace, let loose those lies and hold onto your faith…Israel must unite. It's the youth who God has ordained and he's calling you"(*Coptic Times* Bad Brains). The lyrics can read more like a recruitment campaign for a religious youth movement than a hardcore punk anthem and yet this was still defined as bad rhetoric from an American culture that was realigning with very similar values. But what happens when we listen to the message in the context of the

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music? A very different kind of meaning emerges. Because their self-titled album was successful in establishing the Bad Brains as a significant force in the emerging hardcore punk movement, the second album granted them the artistic freedom and opportunity to kind of 'tweak' how they were perceived. In this case, the textual rhetoric was disregarded and the medium of delivery, the music, overpowered the positive message embedded in the lyrics. They decided to attempt to take advantage of that opportunity in order to distance themselves from what was being increasingly viewed by the mainstream as a violent and threatening counterculture and chart a course that re-aligned them with their deep Rastafarian roots. And while they were successful in achieving their goal within their culture of punk rock, the way they perceived externally was not changed at all.

Another example of this shift can be found in *The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth*, the final song from side A of *Rock for Light*. In this song, we hear a classic mellow reggae song deeply infused with references to religion. While most of Bad Brains music that could be deemed strictly hardcore are songs that are barely 2 minutes long, with *The Meek…* we find ourselves with a nearly four minute long reggae hymn praising the almighty and offering instruction on the proper way to live one's life. "Why must Rasta live this way? The creator has shown us a better way. So why must I and I fight each other? With unity and love for your brother. There's always a better way…" (*The Meek…*Bad Brains). Again, we have an extreme departure of both the sound and the kind of message that we found on the self-titled album. Instead of offering harsh cultural

and social criticism, the Bad Brains were immersing themselves in their faith and find glory and joy in doing so.

That isn't to say however, that Bad Brains completely abandoned the highly oppositional and resistant relation to mainstream culture. There were new tracks released on Rock for Light that very much perpetuated that aspect of the counterculture. It is interesting to note that *The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth* comes right after *Riot Squad* as the last 2 songs on the album. *Riot Squad* very much continues to identify with the more violent and radical classification that mainstream culture had begun to assign to the movement. "You better get ready, you better hold steady, they can't control this angry mob. They'll have to call the Riot Squad." So we again see the rage flare up in the music. We see the willingness to fight. And we see the binary opposition of the "us vs. them" dichotomy re-emerge. The lyrics, coupled with the music present a menacing threat to mainstream culture. They become perceived as an angry mob that can't be contained without having to call in a riot squad. To the uninformed and un-initiated observer trying to make sense of this, a song like Riot Squad could appear to pose a very real threat. And it is representative of the Bad Brains' unwillingness to completely abandon that part of their identity and that part of the identity of the counterculture. The threat was part of the power. Simply shifting over into a kind evangelical Rastafarian religious group would have stripped them of their power to enact any real kinds of change on the culture in which they lived, which was ultimately a primary concern for them.
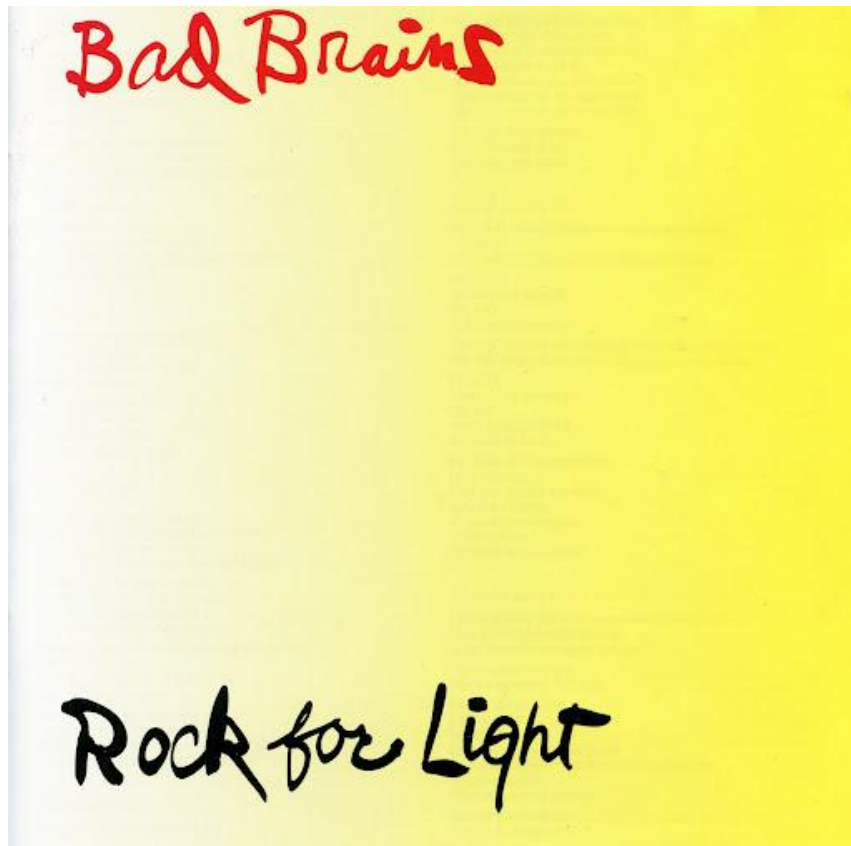
Rock for Light **Cover Art**

Additionally, it is useful to examine the cover art for *Rock for Light*. While the first

album used the highly provocative imagery of a giant yellow lightning bolt descending

from the heavens to shatter the dome of the Capitol building, Rock for Light takes a far

more subdued approach. The cover of the album is simply a white to yellow cross fade

with the band's name written in a sloppy red script across the top left, and the title of the

album appears in sloppy black script across the bottom left. This is a far different image

than that of the self-titled release which came just one year before. It is representative of

a shift in the bands public presentation of their identity. It is perhaps symbolic of an

attempt by the band to redefine their image in the wake of the mainstream beginning to take notice of the evolving counterculture. Because of the fierce resistance to the norms and values of mainstream culture as presented on their first release, they had begun to be defined as a kind of negative and violent force; an identification that was being applied to the counterculture as whole. *Rock for Light* is a far more positive album where the Bad Brains had an opportunity to utilize the cultural and social capital it accrued with the first album, in order to adjust their identity in a way that brought it back in line with their strong connection to Rastafarian ideology.

Conclusions

How did a group of 4 African American Rastafarians with a musical background in reggae/jazz fusion evolve into foundational icons of a radical 1980s counterculture that defined itself in resistance to and opposition against mainstream America? With the release of their first album, the Bad Brains challenged the way the dominant culture used kinds of capital to establish and maintain positions within the larger cultural hierarchy. In Bourdieu's view, one's position is society was largely predicated by the access an individual had to these kinds of capital. Money and access to quality education afforded the individual the opportunity to be exposed to and become knowledgeable about the things in culture that were associated with high taste. Through the gaining of this knowledge, the individual had the opportunity to secure a place high up within the hierarchy and enjoy the comforts such a position had to offer.

The Bad Brains rejected this system and offered an alternative perspective. They carved out a space where a counterculture could emerge that didn't adhere to the norms and

values that governed the mainstream system. Instead, a counterculture evolved in that space that valued the quality of the spirit over the size of the pocketbook. It challenged the conventions of authority and resisted being boxed in to a particular level of the hierarchy by withdrawing from that system all together. Mainstream culture had no place for them; there was nowhere to put them. They ventured outside the construct and in doing so established an identity that could not be defined by that construct.

Punk rock pedagogy must also venture outside of the construct of dominant discourse. It is a pedagogy that rejects the value in simply achieving competency in engaging in standardized forms of academic discourse. If that is all our pedagogies hope to achieve, then as Herndl argues, then we are simply reproducing dominant culture instead of actively resisting it and questioning its worth. Punk rock pedagogy values true critical thinking over the ability to produce a grammatically perfect 5 part essay. While we can't escape our positions within the institution, we can resist the power structures within in a way that enable us to produce students better prepared to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

 For the Bad Brains in particular, this was perhaps a major reason for their expulsion from D.C. Venue owners and managers couldn't understand what they were seeing and hearing. They had no context from which to construct a definition. Because of this, (and the fact that some venues did sustain a fair bit of damage during a performance), it was easier to try to silence the alien threat that sprung up by refusing it the ability to be heard. As referenced earlier, mainstream culture came to define the Bad Brains and hardcore punk rock as dangerous and violent, largely due to the physicality of slam dancing and

moshing at live performances. At their shows "…both Bad Brains and their audience use their bodies in a violent and purposeful way to react and take control of the current social and political situation" (Maskell 414). Internally, these kinds of behaviors made perfect sense. Externally however, it appeared to be a serious threat that needed to be contained.

With *Rock for Light*, which came a year after the release of the self-titled album, we saw the Bad Brains begin to spend some of the social capital they had earned through the significant foundational influence the first album had on the emerging counterculture. It might be that the marked shift in focus from resisting cultural norms and values may have been a result of mainstream culture beginning to recognize hardcore punk as a bona fide phenomenon. And as the mainstream began to attempt to define the nature of the movement, the definitions that were coming about weren't pretty. Because the band was so deeply connected to their Rastafarian ideology, they saw an opportunity to try to adjust how they themselves were being defined and in doing so, attempt to influence how the outside world was attempting to classify them. The name of the album in itself, *Rock for Light*, evokes imagery of a rock music connected with goodness, not the darkness that dominant culture was trying to impose upon them.

Ultimately, the Bad Brains emerged as the perfect 'fathers' of a fledgling movement. It was movement that wanted to define itself in direct opposition to mainstream culture and who better to champion such a cause than 4 men whose music, image and message was completely indefinable and confounding to the dominant system it wished to oppose. It was precisely because of their differentness that people were drawn to them. The visual disconnect between the men, music and message was precisely what mad them powerful.

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They were the perfect men to establish the foundation of the counterculture. In a similar way, those who wish to take up a punk rock pedagogy need to create an identity of differentness as well. Most students have preconceived expectations about their composition classes. By creating a disconnect between those expectations and what they are actually learning in the classroom, we can hope to better engage them to produce stronger students.

Black Flag "Rise Above" from their 1983 album Damaged on SST records.

Jealous cowards try to control
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
They distort what we say
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
Try and stop what we do
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
When they can't do it themselves
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
We are tired of your abuse
Try to stop us, it's no use

Society's arms of control
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
Think they're smart, can't think for
themselves
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
Laugh at us behind our backs
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
I find satisfaction in what they lack
Rise above, we're gonna rise above

We are tired of your abuse
Try to stop us, but it's no use

We are tired of your abuse
Try to stop us, it's no use

We're born with a chance
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
I am gonna have my chance
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
We are born with a chance
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
And I am gonna have my chance
Rise above, we're gonna rise above
We are tired of your abuse
Try to stop us, it's no use

Rise above
Rise above
Rise above
We're gonna rise above
We're gonna rise above
We're gonna rise above

CHAPTER 4

RISE ABOVE: BLACK FLAG AND THE FOUNDATION OF PUNK ROCK'S DIY ETHOS

I am an optimist because I want to change things for the better and I know that blood has to be spilled and disharmony and cruelty are necessary to do that. – Henry Rollins, former lead singer of Black Flag.

Introduction and Background History:

The Early Years

Black Flag, widely regarded as one of the most foundational bands in the hardcore punk movement, emerged from Hermosa Beach, California in 1978; approximately the same time as the Bad Brains was establishing themselves on the East Coast. While both bands would go on to be recognized as highly influential figures in American rock and roll as we know it today, the
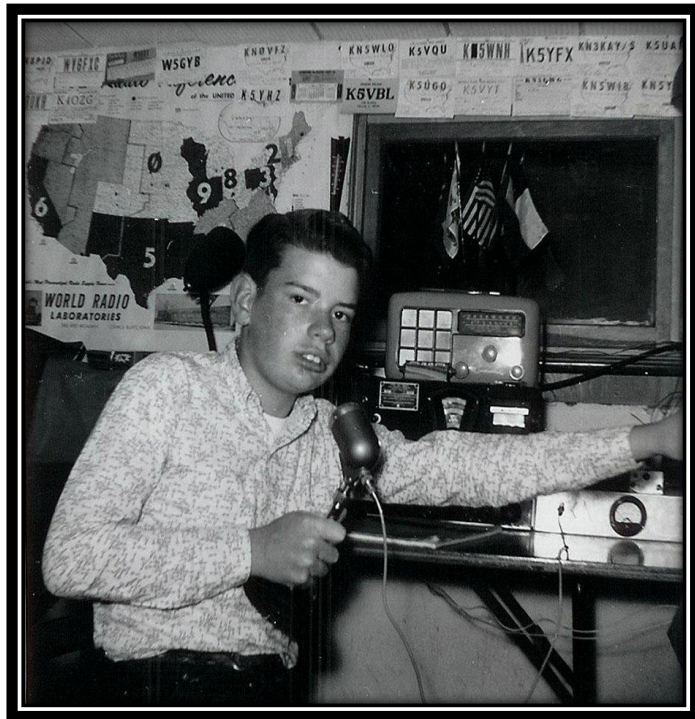
Figure 4.1 Greg Ginn as a teenager with his HAM radio

differences between the two were extreme. The Bad Brains, as 4 African-American Rastafarians fusing punk rock with strong reggae and funk influences, were both musically and visually unique in comparison to what was going on in the mainstream

music world at the time. Black Flag however, were in many ways the personification of what hardcore punk rock wanted to define itself to be.

   Founded by guitarist Greg Ginn with help from friend and singer Keith Morris, the band first appeared under the name Panic in 1977 (Babcock). Ginn was anything but the prototypical punk rocker. While he was raised in the midst of the surf culture of Southern California, he never took an interest in participating in it. As a teenager he spent most of his time establishing a home based business repairing radio sets and self-publishing a magazine for HAM radio operators (Babcock). He went on to attend UCLA where he majored in Economics and Business Management, skills that would be fundamental in his establishment of one of the first truly independent punk record labels which he named SST. SST was an acronym for Solid State Transmitters and perhaps homage to his early interest in radio technology. It was at UCLA that he first discovered music.

> I wasn't interested in popular music growing up. I considered it
> something insubstantial, an insult to listen to. At UCLA, I'd go to the
> library and listen to [American soul and jazz poet] Gil Scot-Heron,
> country, blues, classical and jazz, people doing stuff that you didn't feel
> insulted listening to. I also saw a lot of good touring jazz and blues
> groups. I was never the rock n' roll kid (quoted in Babcock).

It might seem counter-intuitive that Ginn would later go on to establish the paradigmatic model of the Do-It-Yourself ethos that came to define hardcore punk rock. But from an insider's point of view, this is precisely what it was all about. The importance of

becoming "other", and maintaining only that "otherness" without further definition in relation to mainstream America, was one of the core ideologies of the movement.

After graduating from UCLA in 1974, Ginn started to become interested in some of the alternative hard rock bands of the era, such as Iggy Pop's The Stooges, and began hanging around local record stores where he eventually met Keith Morris. Ginn's home-based business repairing radios had grown large enough to require its own space and he hired on Morris to help him.

While Morris originally started out as a drummer, he describes a scene at the SST offices one afternoon as they were trying to find supporting members for their new band:

> …So one afternoon, we were all just sitting around, drinking beer, and The Ramones came on the radio. And I did this swan dive off this desk, somersaulted, flew off the couch, landed face down on the hardwood floor, and jumped back up. Greg just shook his head and said 'You're not playing drums in this band. You're singing!'(quoted in Babcock 3).

Figure 4.2 Black Flag performing in L.A.. in 1980

Shortly after, Ginn and Morris were able to recruit bass player Chuck Dukowski, of the local acid-metal band Wurm, and get rid of their current drummer in favor of Roberto Julio Valverde (a.k.a Robo) (Babcock 4). It was then that the first incarnation of the band was established.

However, the band members soon came to realize that while the name 'Panic' appropriately captured the kind of image the band was after, it was also a name being used by several other emerging Southern California groups. Ginn's younger brother, artist Raymond Pettibon, who would eventually be responsible for nearly all of the bands artwork on albums and promotional flyers, suggested the name Black Flag and it resonated with all of the members (Babcock 4). Bass player Chuck Dukowski recalls his

reaction: "I said 'I really like that name'. It's got the anarchist fuck-all-y'all thing, it's got the Black Flag bug spray thing, and it just sounds tough – like Black Sabbath" (quoted in Babcock 5).

While Black Flag and Greg Ginn are largely credited with establishing the punk rock DIY ethos,

Figure 4.3 The four bar logo of the band

doing it themselves came about strictly out of necessity. Once the band had a complete

line up, they began to establish themselves towards the end of 1978. They were playing

live shows wherever they could and were eager to release an album. They initially drew

some interest from Bomp, a local garage-rock label, but due to cash flow problems, the

record never came into existence (Sinclair 2). Ginn eventually realized that doing it

themselves was the only way they were going to be able to make it happen. Shortly

before Christmas in 1978, the band recorded a four song, five minute long EP which they

titled *Nervous Breakdown*. Ginn took it upon himself to press 2,000 copies of the 7 inch

record at a cost of $1,000. In doing so, SST Records was being founded and the model

for the DIY ethos was being created.   According to Ginn: "I wasn't looking forward to

putting out records myself, because I felt that I had my hands full between working my

business and trying to play. So it was kind of by default: 'I can do this...so, I'll do it.'"(quoted in Babcock 5). It was this attitude that came define hardcore punk rock.

Punk rock pedagogy would need to embrace the DIY ethos as well. I will offer a model for what a pedagogy like this might look like in Chapter 5, but it is difficult to say with any certainty what might emerge. Because punk rock was pushing back against the pre-packaged world of the commercial music industry, there was no formula for creating punk rock music. Those who were involved simply embraced the ideology and created their own musical forms that they felt were reflective of those beliefs. If a formula did exist, then they would have been doing nothing more than reproducing the form of dominant culture that they were trying to resist. Punk rock pedagogy needs to do the same; that is to say that if its aim is to resist dominant discourse in the academy, then those who engage with it need to simply embrace that ideology and then creatively invent new methods that help to achieve their goals.

Ginn's brother and the source of the name of the band, Raymond Pettibon, furnished the artwork for the record sleeve, and in doing so established the visual aesthetic that came to be an integral part of the bands' identity. Pettibon would go on to illustrate many of Black Flag's future works and eventually become a well-respected member of the international art scene. However, at this time, his illustrations were typically crude and usually controversial or offensive which was an appropriate fit for the emerging movement.

Visual analysis of *Nervous Breakdown*

As the first visual image to be produced by the band, the cover of the Nervous Breakdown EP requires further analysis. In *Reading Images*, Kress

Figure 4.4 The cover art from Black Flag's 1978 EP *Nervous Breakdown*

and van Leeuwen introduce their concepts of the given and the new as being positioned on the left and right respectively, and their notion of the ideal and the real being positioned on the top and bottom respectively. Elements placed on the left side of a visual composition are presented a something that is given, or something the viewer already knows (Kress and van Leeuwen 187). In examining figure 4.4 as a whole, the title of the LP *Nervous Breakdown* becomes the given. In most cases, individuals who bought such records were familiar with how to read the covers and could easily understand the text,

although placed vertically along the left margin, represented the name of the record. The new then becomes the illustration that appears in the center and right of center of the album cover. The illustration depicts what appears to be a teacher holding a chair fending off a student who has his fists raised and looks ready to fight. This can be interpreted as new because it inverts and subverts traditional notions of the student teacher relationship where violence does not enter into the equation.

However, when looking at figure 4.4 on its own, a different kind of reading can emerge. The teacher becomes the given and the student becomes the new. The teacher can be recognized largely due to the appearance of the end of a chalkboard protruding from the left border of the image. Additionally, the balding head, eyeglasses and mode of dress all contribute to allowing the viewer to recognize the figure as an authority figure. The young man on the left can be interpreted as being a student largely due to his presence in a classroom facing off against a teacher. This can be read as being the new because we see a representation of a scene that is atypical of what he have been socially constructed to expect. A young man in a classroom aggressively assuming a fighting stance as a teacher attempts to defend himself with a chair.

The concept of the ideal and the real from Kress and van Leeuwen's *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* is also applicable here. The name of the band and the four bar logo appears across the top of the album cover. This can be read as the ideal in the sense that because this was the band's first release, their name printed in bold letters across the top of the image marked a kind of legitimization through self-producing and distributing their own music. Kress and van Leeuwen describe the upper section of an

image as the place that "…visualizes the promise of the product, the status of glamour it can bestow upon its users, or the sensory fulfillment it can bring" (Kress and van Leeuwen 192). It is the final piece of this quote that applies here. As previously mentioned, the name "Black Flag" was attractive to the band members because of the associations with anarchy, insecticide, and other popular rock bands that name invited. Having established themselves by playing live shows around the Los Angeles area in the late 1970's, a consumer would come to have idealized expectations of the album.

When shifting the gaze from the top of the album cover to the bottom, the audience encounters the illustration which can then be construed as the real. For Kress and van Leeuwen, "The upper section tends to make some kind of emotive appeal and to show us 'what might be'; then , lower section tends to be more informative and practical, showing us 'what is'"(Kress and van Leeuwen 192). From this perspective, the name of the band and the logo represent 'what might be' in the sense that the album represented a punk rock band producing and releasing its own music. The illustration then becomes highly symbolic of 'what is'. Punk rock existed very much outside of the realm of mainstream culture and there were consequences for participating in it. In this case, the misunderstanding and inability of mainstream culture to assign some kind of definition on the movement resulted in frustration and fear. The punk rocker then becomes dangerous; a threat that dominant culture needed to protect itself from, as represented by the teacher in the image holding off the young punk with a wooden chair. This was the reality that members of the punk rock community were forced to deal with and it was an aspect of life as punk that most could easily identify with.

The illustration in Figure 4.4 can also be read as being symbolic of the attitudes many students bring in to the composition classroom. In my English 103 classes, on the first day of class I would ask my students to respond honestly to the following questions: "How many of you think that being required to take this class is a waste of time because you are preparing for a career in the sciences?" and "How many of you hoping to get through this class as painlessly as possible by doing only as much as you need to get by?" I assured my students that there would be no reprisal or consequences for being honest and most of them took me at my word. In the 4 classes I taught, I'd estimate that roughly 75 percent of the students raised their hands after my questions. Just as the student is raising his fists to his teacher in Figure 4.4, our students are metaphorically doing the same. The will to resist and oppose already fills our classrooms; we simply need to implement a pedagogy that harnesses that energy to productive ends.

Black Flag and Foucault: Power Structures Exposed

Between the years of 1978 and 1981, the band underwent a series of lineup changes that eventually stabilized with the arrival of Henry Rollins taking over the role of lead vocalist.   The band had gained notoriety by this time as news of their aggressive music and violent live performances began spread by word of mouth through the local punk scenes around the nation. After releasing a series of 7 inch and 12 inch EP's – *Nervous Breakdown* in 1978, *Jealous Again* in 1980, followed by the *Six Pack* and *Louie Louie* EP's in 1981, the band began to work on their first full length album, *Damaged* (KFTH). While founding member Greg Ginn had already established SST as the independent record label for Black Flag, he signed a contract with MCA Records subsidiary Unicorn

Records in
an effort to
increase
distribution.
This was
departure
from the
strict DIY
ethos
adopted
from the
band and it
would
prove to be

Figure 4.5 The cover art from Black Flag's 1983 release *Damaged*

a mistake.

The band was wary of signing with a major label and went so far as to warn MCA

Records of their possible objections to the content of *Damaged*. The warnings went

unheard until the album was finished and MCA executive Al Bergamo finally had a

chance to hear it. After spending an entire weekend listening to it, Bergamo emerged

with the conclusion that the record would not be released under then MCA banner

because it was "anti-parent" (Sinclair 2). Ginn and the band reacted to this decision by

claiming that Unicorn's refusal to release the album amounted to a breach of contract. So

Ginn released and distributed the record himself under the SST label (KFTH 6). Unicorn and MCA, with ample legal resources responded by filing a series of lawsuits and the band responded in kind. The legal battle that ensued resulted in an injunction against the band that forbade them to release any music under the Black Flag name or logo. They ignored this injunction and in early 1983 released *Everything Went Black*, a double EP of unreleased music from the pre-Henry Rollins days without placing their name or logo anywhere on the record (KFTH 6). A judge found Greg Ginn and bass player Chuck Dukowski, as co-owners of the SST label, in violation of the injunction and sentenced them to 5 days in jail (KFTH 6). The injunction would stand until late 1983 when Unicorn Records went bankrupt and the band was released from their legal constraints.

This cycle of events can be analyzed through the lens of Foucault's *The Discourse on Language*. Foucault hypothesizes that:

> …in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role it is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (216).

The procedures he refers to here are three constraints of discourse that he describes as external, internal and the conditions under which discourse can be employed. By external constraints, he is referring to the rules that control of limit the power of discourse from the outside. By internal constraints, he is referring to the rules that exist within discourse, rules that attempt to control chance events. Each of these constraints will be discussed in the context of Black Flag and hardcore punk rock.

As punk rock emerged in the early 1980s, it was attempting to introduce a new mode of discourse to society. However, the dominant powers within mainstream society found this new mode threatening, and in the Foucauldian sense, took steps to attempt to control it in an effort to minimize its danger. As is demonstrated in the band's difficulties with MCA and Unicorn Records, this new mode of discourse was subjected to prohibition. One of the core ideologies of punk rock was precisely the freedom and ability to say that which mainstream culture did not want said. That is to say that Black Flag in particular and punk rock in general were attempting to challenge the dominant norms and values of early 1980s mainstream culture. As a result of this challenge, their voices were effectively prohibited from being heard through traditional channels of distribution. Because Al Bergamo, an MCA executive with the power to decide what did and what did not get released, defined the album as being "immoral" and "anti-parent", he attempted to silence the voice of the aberrant discourse. In mainstream society, there were places and titles assigned to those with the right to criticize the dominant culture such as literary, cultural and music critics, academics or politicians. Punk rock was excluded or prohibited from being accepted as an acceptable voice in the discourse and was therefore prohibited from engaging in it.

Punk rock pedagogy needs to be hyper-aware of this kind of threat. Because I am proposing a teaching philosophy base on resistance, the danger of being prohibited from applying it is real. As discussed earlier, it is difficult to offer a comprehensive definition of punk was because it was so regionalized and it took on different forms in different places. The same must be true for punk rock pedagogy. Through analyzing and

understanding what we need to resist within the particular contexts of our institutions, we came devise ways to implement that resistance in a manner that does not result in the silencing of our voices.

The second of Foucault's external control deals not with a prohibition, but with a division (216). The division that he proposes is that between reason and folly. Foucault illustrates this assertion by offering the example of how the speech of madmen (or of those deemed mad by dominant culture) throughout history can be said not to exist (217). The words of the madman were considered to be merely empty noise, devoid of any meaning or significance, or in some cases, the words might be credited with harboring a kind of secret meaning or truth that could only be interpreted and revealed by those deemed rational. In this sense, the words of the madman never come into existence. If they are considered mere noise, then they simply disappear and are forgotten; if they are seem to hold a secret truth, then that truth is deciphered and re-presented and the words are still discarded and forgotten in favor of the interpretation offered by the rational.

In the case of Black Flag and punk rock, because mainstream culture lacked the ability and desire to understand what was trying to be said, the emerging discourse was defined as being the speech of the mad and therefore of no value. Through defining the movement in this way, it became necessary for dominant culture to ignore or dismiss the new discourse as being that of madness or folly. There was no place for it in mainstream society. It was an empty speech that assigned no value and therefore needed to be marginalized.

Black Flag then emerges as an excellent example of the way that mainstream culture attempted to deal with the threat of American punk rock. When the band violated the unspoken punk rock rule of maintaining a separation from the commercial music industry, they were forced to experience the harsh reality of the power of dominant culture. They ventured outside the relative safety of their own discourse community and quickly found themselves marginalized and silenced not just in the moment, but due to the legal complications, barred from even using their own name for several years thereafter. By attempting to spread an anti-authoritarian message aimed at questioning the validity of the dominant system, they found themselves labeled as madmen and prohibited from entrance into the mainstream discourse community.

Punk rock pedagogy will certainly not be an entirely new and novel concept. Instead, it will follow in the tradition of punk rockers as bricoleurs. There are many strong and sound theories of composition pedagogy out there such as what Berlin describes as the New Rhetoric in his *Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories*. He asserts that the New Rhetoric

> …denies that truth is discoverable in sense impressions since the data must always be interpreted – structure or organized in order to have meaning. The perceiver is of course the interpreter, but she is likewise unable by herself to provide truth since meaning cannot be made apart from the data of experience (Berlin 774).

By appropriating elements from existing pedagogical theory and creating a bricolage incorporating the elements we want, excluding those that we don't and innovating to fill in the gaps, we can hope to avoid the danger of our voices being defined as "mad".

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Conclusions

The preceding chapters have been the beginning of a rhetorical analysis of the unique musical/countercultural genre of American hardcore punk rock and an exploration into how it might be applied to composition pedagogy. Emerging as a reaction to cultural shifts occurring in early 1980s mainstream society, the movement sought to create and maintain an identity in contrast to and resistance of the dominant norms and values that were taking root in America. It attempted to do this through a loud, fast and aggressive style of music that was very different from the popular music of the era. The movement rejected the idea that music was a commodity; something that could be mass produced and marketed to the lowest common denominator in an effort to maximize profits. Instead, American punk rock established the previously discussed DIY ethos, and undertook the task of producing, recording, distributing and performing the music outside the construct of the mainstream music industry.

Punk rock pedagogy needs to learn from this, and apply a similar approach to composition instruction. I've previously mentioned the difficulty in attempting to offer a complete definition of what it means to be punk. However, Seth Kahn-Egan has taken up similar research in his article *Pedagogy of the Pissed: Punk Pedagogy in the First Year Writing Classroom* where he offers the following punk principles:

(1) The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethic, which demands that we do our own

    work because anybody who would do our work for us is only trying to

    jerk us around;

(2) A sense of anger and passion that finally drives a writer to say what's

    really on his or her mind;

(3) A sense of destructiveness that calls for attacking institutions when

    those institutions are oppressive, or even dislikable;

(4) A willingness to endure or even pursue pain to make onself heard or

    noticed. (Kahn-Egan 100).

Using these principles as a guide, I can offer a loose model for what punk pedagogy

might look like in the classroom. I do not offer this as comprehensive model or formula,

but a rather a loose framework from which different forms of this kind of pedagogy

might emerge.

   Perhaps most importantly, a punk pedagogy must embrace the DIY ethos. There can

be no pre-fabricated plan with bullet points outlining what can and cannot be done. To

do so would be to simply reproduce and perpetuate the dominant forms of discourse that

we want to resist. I am not advocating that we completely reject course curricula and all

standards of academic discourse and go about teaching our classes in any way that we

please. A structure is still necessary. What I am advocating is that we embrace the core

punk rock ideology of thinking for ourselves. It is still vitally important that we teach our

students how to follow the norms and conventions that they will be required to know in

order to successfully complete their studies. But we can do so in way that encourages the

play between what we call good and bad rhetoric. I am advocating allowing the classroom to be a site where this kind of play can be explored in a way that allows students to make meaning through composing forms outside of the norm. In Geoffrey Sirc's *Never Mind the Tagmemeics, Where's the Sex Pistols?* He states: "I don't mean to romanticize Punk, but rather heuristicize it, to trace what I feel is its most useful essential thread" (Sirc 18). For me, punk's essential useful thread is the DIY ethos and a commitment to resisting institutional authority through critical thought. These are things that need to heuristicized.

A willingness to resist and push back against institutional authority is already pervasive in our classrooms. What we need to do is tap that energy and turn it to productive ends. The danger here is that students may overreach and attempt to resist all authority, including that of the instructor. To combat this, we need to enter into a relationship with our students that transforms the instructor/student relationship. We need to avoid engaging in what Paulo Friere calls the "digestive" concept of knowledge that asserts that students are "undernourished" and need to be fed by the knowledge we impart upon them (Freire 400). Instead, we can borrow from Cindy Hmelo-Silver's *Problem Based Learning: What and How Do Students Learn?* We can problematize dominant academic discourse and have our students work through ways that they can engage in a productive resistance. We can take on the role of the facilitator in this process, guiding our students along their path, but allowing them to make missteps and to learn from their mistakes along the way.

The principle of punk that Kahn-Egan refers to is a "sense of destructiveness". While this may seem alarming at first, he further qualifies the statement by directing that destructiveness towards institutions that "…are oppressive, or even dislikable" (Kahn-Egan 100). This is what a primary focus of punk rock pedagogy needs to be. The goal is not to try to completely overturn and destroy standards of academic discourse. Instead, it needs to resist and challenge the elements of such discourse that are oppressive and unlikable. For example, the value of the 5 part essay – intro, 3 paragraph body and conclusion – has been abandoned to some degree in the academy. Instead, we are now far more concerned with producing students that can compose in a multimodal environment. As the digital world continues to evolve and new technologies emerge that afford the ability to compose in new and interesting ways, we need a pedagogy in place that challenges the privileging of pedagogies that do not adequately address these issues.

The development of a punk rock pedagogy cannot and should not be a painless process. As I've discussed in previous chapters, there were costs associated with membership within the punk community. Before mainstream culture appropriated, commercialized and commoditized the movement, being punk was not easy. Members became ostracized from social circles and alienated from family. They were ridiculed and tormented. But they maintained their membership within these communities because of their dedication and belief in the core ideology of resistance. Pain was an integral part of the process and it was the pain that made it worthwhile. If sacrifice was not a part of punk rock, it could have wielded the power that it did. Those who choose to advocate punk rock pedagogy will likely experience similar pain. Enacting change in never easy,

particularly when institutional power is challenged. The academy will fight back and we need to be prepared to make sacrifices as we defend our position.

The Bad Brains emerged as icons of the movement as a result of the rhetorical moves they made in creating an identity that resisted dominant culture. Through a combination of textual, visual and musical rhetorics that defied what mainstream culture expected of them. They created a disconnect between they looked and what they did. This disconnect afforded them the opportunity to accumulate the cultural capital they needed to achieve status as the founding fathers of a radical social movement. In the same way, a punk pedagogy would defy the expectations. If we can create a disconnect between what students expect from their composition class and what they actually experience, we can use that disconnect as a way to tap into their pre-existing rebellious inclinations. If we turn these inclinations into positive energy, we can engage our students in a way that allows them to use that energy in the development of critical thinking skills.

Black Flag demonstrates the importance of the adherence to the DIY ethos. When they abandoned the DIY ethos and signed with a major record label, their voice was effectively silenced. This brings us back to Kahn-Egan's first principle of punk concerning the DIY work ethic. Punk rock pedagogy must do the work itself because "…anybody who would do our work for us is only trying to jerk us around" (Kahn-Egan 100). After re-embracing the DIY ethos, Black Flag went even a step farther; they began to resist what punk rock had become. They recognized the movement had strayed from its core ideologies and instead had become more of an aesthetic or stylistic statement than a movement about questioning the validity of institutional authority. In response, the

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band rejected these stylistic affectations and grew their hair long in an attempt to demonstrate that punk was in the process of becoming a kind of warped reproduction of dominant culture. This connects back to Bizell's fears of anti-foundationalist positions slipping back into foundationalist roles. As punk rock developed a more cohesive identity, members of the community continued to focus their criticism on dominant culture and failed to question the institutional authority that was emerging in their own culture. Punk pedagogy needs to be wary of the same process. We cannot select terministic screens that fool us into sliding back into foundationalism. Critical thinking needs to be turned inward as well, with constant analysis of the pedagogical methods being implied to ensure we are maintaining our resistance to the privileging and domination of any discourse.

My own experience teaching composition came long before this research was completed. In retrospect however, I've discovered that I employed many of these principles in my classes. I opened every class by showing the class a punk video of one kind or another in an effort to expose my students to a form of musical composition that most had never been exposed to before. My hope was that regardless their like or dislike of the music, they would at least be exposed to compositions that actively resisted dominant discourse. It is important to note that punk rock pedagogy does not necessarily need to incorporate punk rock music. There are certainly many instructors who might be inclined to embrace a pedagogy of resistance, but have no desire to engage with punk music or culture. It is the adherence to the ideology that counts. If our goal is to challenge and resist dominant discourse, then that is what we must do.

In Sirc's *Nevermind the Tagmemics…* article he states that "Punk composition doesn't care about perfection – where's there no sense, how can there be error? - it's interested in passages…" (Sirc 22). Through focusing on resistance and subversion of dominant discourse we can facilitate our students experience through these passages. Essentially they are passages of transformation. Where power constructs, oppression and domination once lay hidden, our students can emerge with ability to expose, identify and resist that which once held power over them. Punk rock pedagogy is not about starting a revolution, but rather it is about giving our students the ability to question institutional authority wherever they might find it, and make informed decsions about what they wish to accept and what they need to fight against. Punk is dead, long live punk!

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